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# LORD NORTHCLIFFE

A STUDY



R. Macnair Wilson

ERNEST BENN LIMITED

London : Bouverie House

1927

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92  
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TO  
THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER





## SENTENCE OF DEATH

**N**ORTHCLIFFE received me with that rare smile which, personally, I always found irresistible. He offered me cigars and then cigarettes. Then, when he had ministered to my comfort, he said :

“I am told that I am suffering from heart disease.”

His voice was very low, very calm and gentle. He was leaning back in a great arm-chair beside which stood a telephone instrument. The afternoon light, filtering through green curtains, fell softly on his face. The sound of a car “starting up” in Printing House Square, under the windows, came sharply on the silence. Far away I could hear the throb of *The Times* printing presses “running off” some Supplement to that great journal.

What could I reply? The very idea that this man, whom a whole world at war knew as the tireless champion of freedom, should be stricken by illness chilled my heart. He leaned forward a little in his chair.

“It may not be true,” he said. “I am taking further advice. And in any case it does not matter . . . not much . . . at such a time as this. I think I shall be able to carry on, whatever the verdict may be, until the war is won.”

He lay back again. The telephone sounded in a very subdued way and he spoke to somebody. As he spoke his voice thrilled with eagerness.

Then he turned to me again :

"I do want to live long enough to see the end of the war," he said, "because I think that I can help, a little, until then. . . ."

His voice had become strangely wistful. Not before, on all the occasions on which I had met him, had he revealed himself in this fashion. But the revelation was only for an instant. He did not tell me, but I knew then that he cared nothing for his own life except in so far as his life might be of use to his country and her cause. Never, at any time, have I been conscious of such complete conviction about anything as I was conscious, at that moment, of Northcliffe's selflessness.

The event was to prove that I had not received a wrong impression.

*“ Power is founded on Public Opinion.”*

—NAPOLEON.



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BOOK I

THE SOWING

*“The ‘Daily Mail’ is the embodiment and mouthpiece of the Imperial idea.”*



## CHAPTER I

### THE WEARING OF THE GREEN

ALFRED CHARLES WILLIAM HARMSWORTH was born at Chapelizod, near Dublin, on July 15, 1865, two months before the authorities in Dublin struck their first great blow at the Secret Society of the Fenians, the "wearers of the green."

Dublin, on the day when one of the future architects of Irish peace was born, was in an uproar. The Irish, fanned to new paroxysms of fury by the Fenian missionaries and by the Fenian newspaper, *The Irish People*, turned glaring eyes on Dublin Castle, the seat of English power, and spoke threats and curses openly in the streets. They proclaimed in jubilation that, now that the American Civil War had ended, help would soon be forthcoming for them from across the Atlantic. The Anglo-Irish and the Scottish-Irish, the "governing class," on the other hand, declared grimly that, as before, they would soon take steps to "stamp out murder and pillage" and render "even Ireland" safe for honest men.

The new-born infant at Chapelizod belonged to this "governing class." His father, Alfred, was an English barrister, whose family came originally from Hampshire; his mother, Geraldine Mary Maffett, was the daughter of a Dublin land-agent, an Ulsterman of Scottish lowland stock. The oath of the Fenians "to free and regenerate

Ireland from the yoke of England" was utterly detestable to these young people, both of whom possessed a wide outlook on life, and an abiding love of England, and of all for which England has stood in the history of mankind—a love, doubtless, intensified by their circumstances. As she lay with her first-born in her arms, the wife of Alfred Harmsworth must have suffered great anxiety. For the Fenians were known to be desperate men, and their secret power extended, not only throughout Ireland, but throughout America and France as well. Regiments were drilling in lonely places; ships full of gunpowder had been seized already in English ports, and large quantities of weapons had arrived from America. The American Fenians, too, had proclaimed their intention of organizing in Ireland itself a force of nearly a quarter of a million men.

The Maffetts, Alfred Harmsworth's wife's people, belonged to that very class against whom the hatred of the new Secret Society was turned in its bitterest and most extreme form.

## CHAPTER II

### A BOX OF TYPE

HAPPILY, this young mother possessed a character in which fear had no place. Geraldine Maffett, before her marriage, had been well known in Dublin society as a beautiful, warm-hearted and singularly strong-minded girl. At a period when very few women received an education worthy of the name, she was highly educated and she had travelled extensively. Her world was far bigger than the world of most of her companions, and she possessed an individuality which still further enlarged her world.

Such women never hurry into marriage. (On her wedding day this Scottish-Irish girl was twenty-nine years of age, a year older than her husband.) But when they do marry they give to the man of their choice, almost invariably, their entire devotion. Young Alfred Harmsworth was brilliant and charming; that he possessed, in addition, a strong and fine character is certain. No man lacking such natural endowment could have won and held, as he won and held to his life's end, the whole-hearted love of a very able and a very good woman.

But this young Anglo-Irishman had, perhaps, more than a fair share of the modesty of his race. When his son, Alfred Charles William, was born, he had not yet entered on that phase of his professional career in which he was destined to



achieve real success. He was practising at the Irish Bar, and writing articles for the *Dublin Review*. It required the stimulus of his wife's faith in him to convince him that such a field was too narrow, and that only in London, at the English Bar, could he find full scope for his abilities. Thus the baby spent the first two years of his life in the country village near Dublin while his father began to read English law.

These two years saw the fulfilment of the threat of the "governing class" in Ireland to stamp out "rebellion." It is a curious fact that the first considerable event which occurred in Ireland after Alfred Charles William's birth was the suppression of a newspaper, and that this suppression took place only a few miles away from the spot where he lay in his cradle. On September 15, 1865, *The Irish People*, the fierce mouthpiece of the Fenians, was seized, and, on the same day, twenty-five suspected persons were arrested in the City of Dublin.

These events, which caused a big stir in the world, and especially in America, can have made but small impression on the eight-weeks old infant. But they must have exercised a very great effect on the child's father and mother. Moreover, during the whole of the period, until the Harmsworths left Dublin and came to London, Fenian outbreaks, Fenian threats, and Fenian outrages were the chief subjects of interest and of anxiety in Ireland. People spoke of little else and thought of little else. Thus, the earliest impressions which the child, Alfred Charles William, received must have been impressions of strife and bitterness directed against his people and their country, as well as impressions of the strength and greatness of that country in the face of every

kind of hatred and abuse. Modern psychology has abundantly proved that the first year of life, the first of the "years of forgetfulness," is crucial in the formation of human character.

The last day in the old house at Chapelizod made an indelible impression on the child's mind. This house, which Lord Northcliffe afterwards bought, stands in a large garden, flanked by the River Liffey. It is protected from the high road by a wall. A carriage had been ordered to take the travellers to Dublin, and it was waiting, in the darkness, on the road. Meanwhile, messages were received that Fenian bands were approaching the village, and that trouble was likely to break out.

Mrs. Harmsworth decided to take the risk. She wrapped her two-year-old son and his baby sister in a big shawl, and hurried with them to the carriage. They drove away into the challenging darkness. Alfred Charles William frequently recalled that most anxious and most dangerous drive, and told his friend, Mr. Max Pemberton, who mentions it in his admirable *Lord Northcliffe: A Memoir*, that he remembered it in every detail. Possibly memory, in this case, was refreshed by frequent recallings of the experience.

The family settled in Rose Cottage, in the Vale of Health, Hampstead, so that the young father might pursue his legal studies without depriving his child of fresh air and country surroundings. Young Alfred Charles William, who rejoiced already in a mop of fair curls, seems to have taken an immediate liking to the place which, ever afterwards, he spoke of as "Home." Even to his babyish mind the change from Dublin must indeed have

seemed a remarkable one. Hampstead, to this day, holds in its delicious lanes the spirit of England's peace, which is renewed every year when the frail green leaves of April cast their shadows on the old red-brick walls. The air, under the green leaves, seems always to be filled with particles of gold.

There was still talk in the Harmsworth home of the Fenians and their plottings; but London, in those days, was less concerned with Ireland than with the rising up in Europe of the power of the Kingdom of Prussia, the Prussia of Bismarck and Moltke. Would Prussia dare to challenge the Emperor Napoleon III of the French as she had challenged in turn Denmark and Austria? And if she so dared, would victory once more attend her legions?

Englishmen were sharply divided on these questions, and the keen young barrister and his clever wife certainly discussed them freely. Perhaps their sympathies were with the Prussians, for the Fenians had found support in France, whereas Prussia, at that time, was the friend of England. But the utter ruin of Napoleon III in 1870 may well have brought about a change of attitude. In any case the impression of conflict which had come to him in Ireland must have been renewed in the mind of young Alfred Charles William. Even here, in the lovely solitudes of Hampstead, it seemed, there were shocks and alarms, and the rumours of wars.

The child, at five years of age, was very active and very observant. He was also very independent, a fortunate circumstance seeing that his mother's attention was now fully occupied with his little sister and a baby brother. Never-

theless, Alfred Charles William loved his mother with all the intensity of his nature. He loved to help her, and seems, even in the nursery, to have devoted himself to making her happy—a devotion which became, in after years, the great passion of his life. Nor was he less devoted to his father, for whom, from a very early age, he cherished a profound admiration.

That versatile man could scarcely have failed to impress the imagination of a sensitive child. Alfred Harmsworth was interested in everything, and he possessed the power of making those with whom he associated partners in his enthusiasms. He was astonishingly talented. He spoke well, and wrote even better than he spoke—as his contributions to the *Dublin Review*, and a host of other periodicals, show. He had a sound grasp of the law, and was, early, appointed one of the standing counsel to the Great Northern Railway Company. Literary men, journalists, artists, musicians, delighted in his society, and made free of his house. Alfred Charles William was thus brought up in an atmosphere of books and politics, of private enthusiasms and public events.

His young mind, then undergoing its first training at a Dame's school, absorbed impressions greedily, and even succeeded in its turn in conveying impressions to the minds of others. One day, when the boy was seven years of age, a friend of his father's, Mr. Jealous, one of the founders of the Savage Club, and the Editor and proprietor of the *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, made him a present of a box of type.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SEA LIGHT

SOMEONE said once of Northcliffe's eyes that they had in them "the light of the sea." It was true. And in this case, the eyes were the mirror of the spirit.

I think that the same rather mysterious light, which you may see in so many Englishmen's eyes, must have shone in those of the lad's father. At any rate the lad's father chose sea names for several of his sons (Alfred and Harold and Hildebrand), and instilled into the minds of all his sons the sea-sense, which, for want of a better name, perhaps, we call the "Imperial idea." Young Alfred Charles William, playing with his box of type and learning to "think in headlines" — since that box of type was capable of producing little else—grew prouder almost than he could tell of the fact that he was an Englishman, of the island breed and the sea-folk. He heard with indignation—for his temper was swift, like the sea—of the unwearying hate of the Fenians and their friends against England, of which his parents, naturally, knew and spoke so much; but a great bewilderment must have come to him when he heard, also, that Englishmen, as well as Irishmen and Frenchmen and Americans, were ready to denounce the English way and the English worth.

That year, 1872, during which the box of type came to

the Hampstead home, was a year of strife and bitterness. England was beginning to pay the price of her long estrangement from France and of her repudiation of the ideals which underlay the French Revolution. So wide had become the gulf between the two nations that, even in 1870, there were but few Englishmen who could perceive the greatness of the conceptions underlying the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Napoleon remained something of a bogey, and England was permeated with Prussian ideas, for, in spite of the Crimean War, which did nothing, Waterloo and Blücher remained the dominant memories. In 1870 we had seen France trodden in the dust under the heel of Prussia, and had not stirred to help arrest or mitigate that catastrophe; a few years earlier we had seen the Kingdom of Denmark despoiled of two of its provinces by the same Prussian power, and had remained neutral in spite of the fact that the wife of our Prince of Wales, the future Queen Alexandra, was the King of Denmark's daughter. The fear of the French Revolution, that fear which Napoleon carried into every European capital, haunted the minds of the rulers of England as no other fear has ever haunted them.

English "democracy" before 1870 was of a peculiar and special type. Its complexion was aristocratic, and its history was the history of the triumph of the Nobles over the King. In England, in the days of King John, the Nobles forced the King to sign Magna Charta. At a later date some of the Nobles and country squires sent King Charles I to the block. A few years later the English aristocracy gave the Crown of England to William of Orange and his wife,

Mary. Finally, that same tough aristocracy set King George I on the throne, in defiance of the law of legitimacy. The aristocracy of England were victorious, again and again, over the Crown of England, and so London never witnessed that concentration of power in the hands of one man which Paris witnessed when King Louis XIV governed France from his palace at Versailles, and the great Nobles of France were compelled to dance attendance in the Gallery of Apollo. The great Nobles of England shared the supreme power among themselves and their relatives and dependents for centuries. They lived, not in London, but on their estates; and they were, for the most part, remarkably liberal-minded.

Every county in England, and every parish, was familiar with its "gentry." The squire was nearly always a popular figure; he shared in the local interests and sports, and he looked after his own folk. Moreover, he had, as a rule, an ally in the parson, for the Church of England had been brought under the control of the ruling class to such an extent that the parson was, as a rule, actually appointed by the squire.

Thus it came about that what the squire and the parson thought—and their views were usually the view of the higher aristocracy—was accepted as gospel by a majority of the common folk. The squire and the parson, with memories of the Guillotine, the Reign of Terror, and Waterloo in their minds, believed that the ideas of the French Revolution, especially the idea of equality, were the ideas of the enemies of God, and they convinced more than half of the English people that it was only the leadership of their class

which had rescued the beloved island from falling into the hands of English counterparts of Robespierre and Napoleon.

Nor was this state of affairs confined to the country districts. The English aristocracy, the bravest and most capable ruling caste in the world, is also the most intelligent. It had not ceased to recruit its ranks from the lower classes, and notably from the merchant class. Thus, when the industrial revolution began after Waterloo, the leaders of industry became, in many cases, aristocrats, and accomplished in the factories and workshops what the squire and the parson were accomplishing in the villages. The leaders of industry, no less than the leaders of the social world, distrusted the ideas of the French Revolution.

But leaders of industry are dependent on markets, and are exposed to foreign competition—in which respect they differ from squires. The more enlightened leaders of industry realized, about the middle of the nineteenth century, that one of the severest handicaps under which they laboured was the lack of educated workers. There arose a demand among such employers for a system of compulsory education. Instantly the squires, and many of the parsons, were up in arms. They could not see the necessity; they saw the danger.

The employers, however, had powerful allies in the Dissenters, who desired nothing so much as to see the education of the children “rescued” from the hands of the Church of England, and “secularized.” Mr. Gladstone, about 1870, was urged to introduce an Education Act drafted in accordance with the most advanced Liberal and Radical principles.



"The Church," declared Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, a leader of Birmingham's civic life, "has not lost its evil habit of being always on the side of privilege and authority—always opposed to popular reforms. . . . Its interests are bound up with those of wealth and power and vested rights, while the Dissenters, nearer in their origin and their circumstances to the poor, share heartily their hopes, and possibly their prejudices."

Mr. Gladstone introduced his Education Bill, and there was consternation in the camps of the Radicals, for the bill was exceedingly kind to the Church of England—which, nevertheless, opposed it vigorously. The employers got their education and the people their enlightenment. In that year, 1870, while Prussia was striding over the body of France to the rulership of Germany, the way was opened at last to the inflow into England of the ideas of the French Revolution. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was the chief sponsor of those French ideas of equality, and *The Times*, with great insight, likened him at once to Mayor Pétion of Paris, whose contemptuous attitude to poor King Louis XVI, just before the Revolution, is famous. Mr. Chamberlain, therefore, was duly denounced by the rulers of England, the Whigs as well as the Tories, as un-English and a traitor. Nevertheless, equality became the slogan of a new race of political enthusiasts, whose fervour was boundless.

That slogan found echoes in the British lands beyond the seas, where a large part of the population consisted of the descendants of men who had emigrated because of their

inability to live at peace with the squire and the parson. It also found echoes in the new public elementary schools in which many of the teachers were enthusiastic supporters of "the new ideas." The leaders of industry began to get workers who could read and write; but they began, also, to experience industrial troubles of a kind much more serious than any they had formerly experienced.

Their anxieties, very soon, were shared by every household in the land. In the year 1873 the price of household coal rose, as the result of a "Coal Strike," to 52s. The month was February, and the distress was very great. The strikers were denounced as the enemies of society and as traitors to their country; were they not breaking the laws of England?

Here, surely, was a worse case even than that of the Fenians. For, whereas the Fenians were Irish rebels, the descendants of generations of Irish rebels, the miners were men of the island breed, whose weapons were being turned against their own people. How could England survive when Englishmen thus attacked her?

The Conservative mind, at that period, was a rigid mind. Young Alfred Charles William heard, certainly, many an anxious discussion about the future of his native land, and the extreme danger of French ideas. Then, probably, the sea light shone more brightly than usual in his brave young eyes, while his nimble fingers set out fresh headlines, conveying in the smallest possible compass the ideas which surged in his eight-year-old mind.

## CHAPTER IV

### SECRETS

THE boy's mind, at this time, was full of visions. Hampstead Heath was his land of Old Romance, and, occasionally, there were wonderful journeys with his father, who, as Counsel for the Great Northern Railway Company, had to travel extensively. Mr. Pemberton tells of a trip from Grantham to London, on the footplate of an engine, which furnished the boy with an unending source of delight, and which revealed to him, as nothing else could have revealed to him, the greatness in achievement of his fellow-countrymen. That delirious passage through the green fields of England must have seemed like a revelation. Here was freedom, swift and magical and unmeasured, the ecstasy of heroic living, the very wine of romance. No wonder that the mystery of machinery laid its spell on the boy's heart, or that this great, throbbing railway engine awoke in his mind high and strange exaltation. This engine, surely, was a portent, the symbol and the promise of man's release from the shackles which time and place have fastened on his spirit.

But freedom was not yet to be enjoyed as this lad thirsted to enjoy it. He was eleven years of age, and his father and mother decided that he ought to be sent to school. The chilling announcement was made to him that he was to go

to Stamford, in Lincolnshire, to the Grammar School of that town.

Behold him then, in the year 1876, the year in which Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, setting forth from his Hampstead home, and from the jolly society of his brothers and sisters, to go out into most hateful exile in a world that knew him not. The separation is bitter indeed. No more headline-building now; no more eager listening to his father and his father's friends; no more helping of his mother. . . . That parting from his mother was certainly the cruellest wrench of them all. . . .

Every boy has the same experience, doubtless. Yet, I think that this boy found the experience harder to endure than do most others. I think that his home meant more to this boy than home generally means to boys of his age. At Stamford he was cut off from inspiration as well as from friends; his mind, already far more active than the minds of his fellows, was starved of all its accustomed enthusiasms. Young Harmsworth never paid a finer tribute to his father, and he paid many tributes to him, than when he declared that his memories of Stamford Grammar School were dreary and uninspiring in the extreme.

Happily for him, he was not destined to remain long in such an atmosphere. The Harmsworth family was increasing quickly, and even a substantial income is apt to prove inadequate in such circumstances. In 1878, two years after his departure from home for Stamford, Alfred Charles William was recalled, and sent to a day school, Henley House, in Hampstead.

Once again he was back in the "swim" of things, and

his spirits instantly revived. He threw himself with immense eagerness into the life of the school, and became Captain of the football and cricket teams. He also started, at the age of thirteen, a school magazine, which, at first, he wrote himself with his own hand. But a little later, when the magazine began to find readers, he put the second part of his plan into execution. He entered into an arrangement with a printer, in Kilburn, named Ford, whereby he was allowed, in Ford's shop, to set up the magazine in print himself.

That work absorbed all his interest, so that every other kind of work came second to it. The boy began to experiment in type-setting, and found, as he told me long afterwards, that it is actually possible to make up a page of type in such a way that "it will leap to the eye." He found that there are "dull flat pages," which "seem to shrink from the reader," and he found also how, by cunningly contrived means, to "raise" these pages up, and make them exciting.

But these were only the beginnings of his discoveries. He learned the profound secret of "display"—the method of giving to a reader the sense of a vast assortment of interest grouped around one central interest. Those who opened the *Henley House Magazine* felt themselves, mysteriously, lured into reading it. As they read, they became, by some alchemy, excited.

Here is the secret of secrets.

## CHAPTER V

### THE WHEELS OF ADVENTURE

WHILE the young Harmsworth was experimenting with his school magazine, Mr. Chamberlain, in the House of Commons, was fighting fiercely for the abolition of flogging in the British Services. (Flogging had been abolished more than seventy years before in the French Services by Napoleon.) There is evidence that the Hampstead schoolboy, then fourteen years of age, followed this battle for humanity and commonsense with very close interest. Young Harmsworth had been severely handled himself, while at Stamford Grammar School; he had not forgotten, and he never did forget, that experience. With his whole brave soul he abhorred cruelty in every shape and form. Some forty years later, when he visited the terrible penal settlement in Tasmania, and inspected the records of that place, he wrote :

“ How many realize that, as recently as 1850, little boys and girls of eight and nine were sent out in convict ships to Tasmania ? . . . I looked at some of the charges against the children. One : a boy, son of a widow, transported for stealing a shilling. Two : a girl of ten, sent out from York for scorching linen in a laundry. I am sorry to say that the

Englishmen of 1850 were worse than the Huns. Boys and men were thrashed to death. The convicts served a life sentence in enormous heavy chains which bound their hands and feet; to these were attached giant iron balls. They lived in dreadfully dark cells, so made that they could not lie down. The graves of two thousand of them are situated on Death Island. The only way to escape was across a narrow neck of land in which were kept savage and hungry dogs chained to a long steel bar."

Young Harmsworth's heart was with the Revolutionary of Birmingham who fought to abolish the last remnants of such horrors; but even so, he could not—and there is evidence, did not, forgive Mr. Chamberlain for being the friend of France and of Russia at a moment when Disraeli was triumphing over both. That strange, romantic man had become the idol of English Conservatism; he was at the very height of his amazing career, and everybody was dazzled. Sober English squires underwent the truly thrilling experience of seeing the British Empire through the eyes of a Jew as a land of hearts' desire, with its towers and its temples spread, glittering with gold, in effulgent sunlight. Disraeli's imperialism was the imperialism of India, with its immemorial mystery and its magic, and he managed so to bewitch his fellow-countrymen that they supposed that no other kind of imperialism was possible. British Foreign Policy was inspired by the ideals of King Solomon. And consequently it roused men of the Chamberlain type to frenzy. Chamberlain, like Gladstone, denounced the Turk—Disraeli's friend—in a thousand speeches, and spoke with contempt of "the

vulgar patriotism of the music-halls"—by which he meant the Oriental imperialism of Disraeli.

Young Harmsworth, in these days, was, I think, an "Oriental Imperialist"; but influences far different from the wizardry of the great Jew were, nevertheless, working on his mind. The most potent of them all was the bicycle which his father had given him, one of the old-fashioned "Spider" machines, known also as "penny-farthing," from the great size of the front wheel and the small size of the back one. His bicycle made Alfred Charles William free of the highroad, and allowed him to taste, once again, the swift and exquisite joy which he had known on the footplate of the big railway engine between Grantham and London. Mr. Max Pemberton, who likewise possessed a bicycle, has given a vivid account of the enthusiasm of his friend Harmsworth for his new "toy."

"Upon one occasion we had a club ride on a Saturday to St. Albans, and upon returning to St. John's Wood at midnight, my brother suggested that we should go on to Eastbourne for breakfast. The majority of us declined the proposal with thanks, but the undaunted Harmsworth immediately accepted the invitation, and the pair set off amid cheers. I heard a few days later that they encountered a heavy mist in the neighbourhood of Uckfield, and were compelled to take refuge under a hedge at four in the morning, and there to remain for a couple of hours. Nevertheless they arrived at Eastbourne about ten o'clock, went immediately to bed, and, having slept until five in the afternoon, departed at once upon their return



journey. Of such stuff were the cyclists of the year 1880 made."

His bicycle taught young Harmsworth many an unexpected lesson. He made friends with strange folk on his excursions, and drank deep of the red wine of laughter and good fellowship. Tramps, countrymen, wayfarers of every sort, exchanged with him their experiences, and discussed with him their grievances, and his insatiable curiosity, aided by his superlative powers of observation, soon revealed to him a new England, strangely unlike that which haunted the minds of the Oriental Imperialist and his followers, very much like that which Mr. Chamberlain described in such trenchant language—an England of unwearied patience and most wistful hope, docile, good-humoured, wondrously courageous. There seems to have entered the boy's mind a feeling that this new England deserved better of the rulers of England than the rulers understood. At any rate, as his love of the open country grew and deepened, his horror of slums and of their darkness intensified.

That horror never left him.

"I cannot bear," he wrote in Australia, in the last year of his life, "to contrast our slums with the sunshine and plenty here."

There was another lesson which his bicycle taught him, namely the unquenchable determination of the human spirit. This machine, he told himself, like the great engine, had been built up out of failure and disappointment by hands which wrought faithfully for the enlarging and fulfilling of human life. And so, to the old romance of the open road, there

was added a new romance, swifter and more inspiring. Englishmen had invented both the steam engine and the bicycle ; to such a breed of men, surely, honour and happiness belonged by inalienable right.

There awoke in the lad's spirit a desire—it is the mark and seal of the journalist—to share his experiences and his new knowledge with the world, to tell the rulers of England, on the one hand, of the goodness and sweetness of the English people, and to tell the English people, on the other hand, a little of the mighty rulership which they themselves possessed in the ends of the earth.

In that year, 1880, young Harmsworth presented himself at the office of the *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, from which had come his first box of type, and offered his services to his father's friend, the good Mr. Jealous, to perform such journalistic work as might be given him. He got a number of small reporting commissions, for which he was paid at the very modest rate then customary for such work. It was not, however, pay so much as experience which the lad was seeking. He knew something, now, of the possibilities of type ; he wanted to learn about the possibilities of actual newspaper work.

The moment was sufficiently exciting, for the fall of Disraeli from power, and the sweeping victory of Gladstone—in the great Midlothian campaign—and of Chamberlain, had turned all minds suddenly from foreign to home affairs. Oriental Imperialism was at a discount ; the “ parish-pump politics ” of the Man of Birmingham, as they were contemptuously called by their opponents, were high in national favour.

"I will confess to you," declared Mr. Chamberlain to the members of the Birmingham Town Council, "that I am so parochially minded that I look with greater satisfaction to our annexation of the gas and water to our scientific frontier in the improvement area, than I do to the result of that Imperial policy which has given us Cyprus and the Transvaal; and I am prouder of having been engaged with you in warring against ignorance and disease and crime in Birmingham, than if I had been the author of the Zulu War, and had instigated the invasion of Afghanistan."

There is no better place in which to study "the parish pump" than the office of a local newspaper, and young Harmsworth availed himself of the opportunity offered him. He began to learn how overwhelming was the need in England of the kind of work which Chamberlain and his friends were doing—though I fancy that his conservative upbringing must have caused him to rejoice that the Conservatives, and not the Liberals, Disraeli, and not Gladstone, had taken the first step towards a healthier Britain, namely the Public Health Act, the sure foundation of our modern world. The great Jew deserves far more honour than he has received for this "policy of sewage," which so painfully bored many of his own supporters. Oriental Imperialism had this, in common with the Imperialism of the present day, of Chamberlain and Rhodes and Northcliffe, that it shrank in horror from the sordid and the unwholesome.

At fifteen, however, politics are never very practical. Young Harmsworth wished to see his fellow-countrymen happy and healthy, well housed and well fed; he wished to see the British Empire great and glorious, and to witness

the firm linking together of his native Ireland and England ; but the idea uppermost in his mind was the establishing of contact between the public and himself. He wished to write, and so to tell the whole world about the new thoughts and new ideas which surged in his brain.

He began to send articles to the great London newspapers.

## CHAPTER VI

### “THE YOKE IN HIS YOUTH”

WITH monotonous regularity his articles were returned to him. The public, it seemed, or at any rate the editors who catered for the public taste, had no great desire to receive his thoughts and ideas.

The lad set his teeth, and began to learn the first, hard lesson of writing-men. Mr. Pemberton says that, on one great occasion, he actually had an article accepted for *The Globe* newspaper, a success which, without doubt, recompensed him for a whole world of failure. Nevertheless, he must have realized with painful clearness that the way before him was a desperately difficult one.

His father had no doubt on the subject, and he did not lack experience. Moreover, his father's friends, and the number included some distinguished journalists, urged him to abandon the idea of newspapers altogether.

“Take your father's advice,” these counsellors said. “Go to Cambridge, and then study law.”

The young man seems to have been impressed to some extent by these opinions. In 1881, when sixteen years of age, he was placed under a tutor, and began to study seriously. But he could not, try as he would, sever himself from his first love. Articles were written and posted off—to *The Globe*, to the *Bicycling News*, and to a group of papers owned by

Mr. James Henderson at Red Lion Court. Nor did this bombardment stop when young Harmsworth went abroad, on his first visit to the Continent.

That visit was a very great experience. The lad travelled with the Rev. E. V. R. Powys, third son of Lord Lilford, a friend of his father, and together they visited France and Germany: the France of the Third Republic just beginning to recover from the effects of the Prussian War, the Germany of Bismarck. Harmsworth brought his powers of observation to bear on everything he saw; he conceived an immense admiration for the scientific thoroughness of the German method, but France, nevertheless, attracted him strangely and strongly. At sixteen the glamour of Napoleon already fascinated his imagination.

That continental visit was the last excursion of irresponsible youth. Very soon after his return, the young man sustained a heavy blow in the illness of his father. He recognized that he must put away all thought of Cambridge, and set about immediately earning his own living, and affording to his mother such help as lay in his power.

His courage never faltered, though the situation was one to try the courage of the bravest. Instinctively he turned to journalism, and threw himself, with all the ardour of his nature, into the work of gaining a footing on that slippery ladder.

It was no longer a question merely of personal satisfaction. There was need to earn money. He set himself seriously to study the public taste and to satisfy it. He renewed his acquaintance with Mr. James Henderson, of Red Lion House,

and began to write for the boys' and girls' papers which that shrewd old Scotsman produced.

"Mr. James Henderson," he often said, "was my journalistic sponsor."

Henderson kept open table daily for his contributors, and young Harmsworth availed himself freely of the opportunity to get into touch with other writers. Moreover, he learned a great deal during these meal hours from Henderson himself, for his host was a born journalist, with a flair for titles and headings—as is attested by the fact that when Robert Louis Stevenson submitted to him the manuscript of a story for boys called "The Sea Cook," Henderson changed the title of that story, promptly, to "Treasure Island."

Henderson's publications were not, of course, newspapers. For the moment young Harmsworth had given up hope of breaking through "the barbed wire entanglements" of the daily Press; he was concentrating on the weeklies and the papers devoted to special subjects.

"As I went in and out of these (daily) newspaper offices," he wrote long afterwards, "I found that their organizations were so constructed that one could never convey an idea to the men at the top. Contact with the staff was, as a rule, by postcard. There were rumours in Fleet Street about high and mighty personages who surrounded the editor, and once I did get as near to these great gentlemen as a talk with the late most gifted and kindly George Augustus Sala, who strongly advised me to have nothing to do with journalism. He had been at it for forty years and knew. The only persons actively connected with the organizations of daily newspapers

whom I ever did encounter in those days were Mr. Greenwood, then editor of the *St. James's Gazette*, and Sir John Le Sage, of the *Daily Telegraph*, neither of whom strongly adhered to the system of impersonal relations with journalists. Mr. Greenwood did me a great deal of good by rejecting most of the articles I wrote for him.

“ The competition that was lacking in the daily journals was very active in weekly publications. . . . Sir William Ingram, and any of the editors of Cassell's, were as accessible as Mr. Henderson, and, though hampered by great delicacy of constitution and continual ill-health, I kept the wolf from the door.”

One of the most successful articles which Harmsworth wrote at this period dealt with fireworks. It was accepted by a paper called *Youth*, owned by Sir William Ingram, the principal proprietor of *The Illustrated London News*. In due course a proof of the article reached Harmsworth, who, having corrected it, carried it back himself to the office. There he met Sir William Ingram. Ingram had read the article on fireworks, and had been impressed by it. He actually asked for a series with which to “ follow it up.”

This was Harmsworth's first piece of solid success, and his hopes soared high. They soared even higher when, a few months later, Ingram offered him the assistant editorship of *Youth*, at a salary of £1 11s. 6d. a week, and with it, of course, more or less direct access to the public. He was seventeen now, but already he had begun to bear some of the burdens of manhood; already he knew what it meant to work desperately, against time and tide, for the sake of those



he loved. These, I think, were the days in which Harmsworth began to see his mother with a man's eyes, and to add a man's love for and devotion to her to the love and devotion of boyhood. And no mother ever more richly merited such respect and affection. In the days when illness cast its shadow on her home-life, and when the cares of her large family made the heaviest demands on her strength and sympathy, Mrs. Harmsworth showed herself a very noble and a very gracious character. Her son gave her all his heart; during the whole of his life his sweetest joy was to help her, his best reward was her approval.

Nor was this approval lightly bestowed. Northcliffe's mother resembled Napoleon's mother in her uncompromising attitude to all that she regarded as unrighteous and unfair. She never hesitated to express her opinions; and her great son had the wisdom to listen, always, to the voice of love. He knew that his mother desired only his highest welfare, that her devotion to him was selfless, and that never, in any circumstances, would she dissemble her real opinions. Others might flatter: "My dear mother" (as he always called her) loved and spoke the truth. There is a small entry in the diary which Northcliffe kept of his tour round the world which illumines his character.

"I would like," he wrote, "those who gave me little keepsakes before I left to know that among the most used are mother's little book (*Daily Light on the Daily Path*), and the case of scent bottles—nothing is more refreshing than *eau-de-Cologne* and lavender water in the tropics—and the medicine chest, which is used every day, the thermometer

and barometer, and the automatic ‘ dater ’ given me by my wife’s mother.”

Curiously enough, that entry is dated August 21, 1921 ; in the same month of 1922 Northcliffe died. His diary is full of references to his mother, who was in his thoughts every day. For example :

“ August 19, 1921. I wire to Mother every day. How shall I manage about Friday, when there is no Friday ? ” (His ship was crossing the equator from East to West.)

“ Sep. 6, 1921. Letters. . . . Mother is at Sandown enjoying her wheel chair.

“ Dec. 24, 1921. Christmas Eve—Mother’s birthday !

“ Jan. 2nd, 1922. My mother is well, and evidently very vigorous, for she writes me a stiff one about the policy of my newspapers in regard to Ulster, and refers to the cable she sent me complaining of their attitude towards Ulster.

“ Jan. 29, 1922. A few letters . . . one telling me that my mother is very well indeed.

“ Jan. 30, 1922. I turn to reading . . . a little book full of wisdom which Mother gave me to guide me (*Daily Light on the Daily Path*), so to-day it says, *inter alia*, ‘ It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.’ I do often ask that my early ‘ success ’ may not have spoiled me ; but I did bear some yoke, a good deal more, in fact, than I like to talk about.”

The young Harmsworth never talked about the yoke he was bearing. In Fleet Street he was gay and brave with, as was said of him, “ something in his appearance of the

freshness of the dawn." He neither asked nor desired any special consideration. When he came to the assistant editorship of *Youth* he came eagerly, modestly, and yet with a clear knowledge of his special qualifications :

"As I had edited a printed school journal," he wrote long afterwards—and the thrill of pride still lingers in the word "printed"—"there were no mysteries of type and proof for me."

The work on *Youth* prospered, and, later on, Harmsworth became the editor of that paper.

## CHAPTER VII

### “ A FIERY YOUNG RADICAL ”

THE yoke continued its sore pressure, but the handsome, fair-haired boy bore its galling with a smile on his proud lips. In all my life I have never known anyone who was so appreciative of a kindness done to him as was Northcliffe ; I never knew anyone who asked less for himself or gave more freely of his best to others. Indeed, Northcliffe always struck me—I heard that he struck people in Australia in the same way—as a curiously “ fatherly ” man. He had a way of being kind which was most truly the way of good fathers, a mixture of shyness and modesty and understanding. One of his secretaries told me that once he forgot to send off the messages which Northcliffe had dictated to him. He received a sharp reprimand. But that very night, there awaited him a telegram from the man whose whole day’s work had been disorganized—and what a day’s work it was !—telling him not to be upset. I cannot now vouch for the exact wording, but I think the telegram ran in this fashion—its exact words were repeated to me :

“ I know you didn’t understand. But these matters were urgent, and in a very large business it is impossible to overlook mistakes of this kind. Please don’t worry about it any more, as everything is now in order.”

The recipient of that telegram is to-day a very distinguished man of letters, with a critical faculty of the highest order. The last time I met him he spoke of Northcliffe ; his tones softened perceptibly as he spoke.

The editorship of *Youth* came to an end and there was nothing left to young Harmsworth but a return to his "freelancing," that is to say to his bombardment of editors with articles and paragraphs. It is, without question, the most exacting and the most exhausting work in which anyone can engage. For the freelance is condemned to make his bricks without straw. He must, to change the metaphor, catch his hare, in every case, before he cooks it.

Yet I like to dwell on this period of Harmsworth's life. I like to think of him setting forth each morning with the yoke of his beloved mother's need on his young shoulders and the dogged determination of his breed in his heart. I like to see those candid eyes challenging the new day to yield up to him its store of human interest or of human tragedy and then, afterwards, to behold him weaving the strange patterns of news from the warp and woof of his observation. In these lean days of 1882 Harmsworth learned the meaning of "news"; he learned to love news as a man of science learns to love exact observation. Little by little the deep significance of human action, even the most apparently trivial human action, was borne in on his mind. He might say, with his whimsical smile, when asked to give a definition of news :

"When a dog bites a man, that is not news : when a man bites a dog, that is."

But already, at seventeen, he had learned far better.

News is the truth about man's activity or his misfortune or his folly or his devotion. There can be no news when the human interest is lacking.

“ Do not write about ‘ the judge ’ when you are reporting a law case,” cried the founder of the *Daily Mail* to his staff. “ Speak of the judge by name. Let your readers realise that he is a living man and not a legal term.”

A small matter, perhaps ; but big with consequences, nevertheless, for to-day, at long last, and thanks in part to the influence of Harmsworth, the iron severity of the England criminal code has been softened. The judge has become, for all of us, the man ; and there are children's courts and the system of probation for first offenders and the spirit of preventive medicine in prisons to bear witness to the all-pervading influence of that change. And to-day there is less crime in England than at any earlier period of her history. I may be wrong but I think that Harmsworth foresaw clearly the effect of his policy of keeping news human even in the law courts. This man was invariably on the side of mercy.

The weekly papers brought Harmsworth's “ news articles,” and in addition, he achieved the great distinction of writing leaders for the *Morning Post* and articles for the brilliant *Pall Mall Gazette*. He was full of courage. Was not the spirit of humanity in the very air of this glorious new world into which he had had the great good fortune to be born ? At last, he knew it, England, the great, patient, voiceless England of the common folk was stirring to activity. Strange, wonderful ideas, like a strong wind, blew across the ancient fields and villages. Men spoke to one another of

freedom, of the right to live, of the right to have part and place in the rich and intricate design of life. The day was at hand, he felt, when the greatest of the great newspapers would be glad to fill their columns with the romance of human achievement.

“How to promote the greater happiness of the masses of the people,” Mr. Chamberlain, “the voice of voiceless England,” was crying, “how to increase their enjoyment of life—that is the problem of the future. . . . Squalid homes, unhealthy dwellings, overcrowding : these are the causes—the fruitful causes—of the crime and immorality of great cities. They are the direct result of a system which postpones the good of the community to the interest of individuals.”

Mr. Chamberlain had his political remedies for these ills ; young Harmsworth knew that all remedies, no matter how cunningly contrived, must fail of their purpose unless they possessed the support of a public opinion formed by news, and by news—human news—sustained from day to day. Nevertheless the lad’s interest in the *Man of Birmingham* grew and deepened. Forty years later, he declared :

“I began life in Fleet Street as a very fiery young Radical reporter.”

There was, however, as I have said, one direction in which young Harmsworth could not follow Chamberlain, namely the direction of Irish self-Government. The *Man of Birmingham* was, at this time, in close touch with Parnell, that strange, mysterious character, “compounded of ice and fire” ; it was popularly believed that Parnell and Chamberlain meant,

if possible, to give Ireland Home Rule. In other words the governing classes in Ireland, the Anglo-Irish, the Scottish-Irish and the Ulster folk were—if Chamberlain had his way—to govern no longer. They were to be governed—by the native population, the "Irish-Irish."

Such an idea, very naturally, filled with horror and dismay those who had had first-hand experience of the Fenians and who had all their lives rejoiced in the fact that Ireland was a part of the United Kingdom. The "Irish-Irish," it was passionately proclaimed, were at heart enemies of England. They were Roman Catholics and were dominated by the priests. Home Rule meant, and must mean, Rome Rule; it meant and must mean the persecution of the loyalist minority by the unloyal, Fenian-supporting majority.

The Harmsworth family had not forgotten Chapelizod; young Alfred Charles William felt, with all the intensity of his nature, that to weaken in any way the bond uniting Ireland to England would be to strike a mortal blow at England's safety and England's strength.

The horrible assassinations in Phoenix Park, Dublin, on May 6, 1882, of Lord Frederick Cavendish, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, and of Mr. Burke, the permanent Under-Secretary, came to confirm this faith. These two brave men had shown themselves the friends of Ireland; they had been murdered in cold blood. Ireland, the "Irish Ireland," was largely unrepentant. In a speech delivered in the House of Commons some time later Parnell hissed about:

"the congenial work of the gallows in Ireland . . . the secret inquisition of Dublin Castle . . . the payment of



blood money . . . the taxes which an unfortunate and starving peasantry have to pay for crimes not committed by them."

Mr. Chamberlain seemed to echo these sentiments :

"The existing system of rule in Ireland," he declared, "is a system which is founded on the bayonets of 30,000 soldiers encamped permanently as in a hostile country. It is a system as completely centralised and bureaucratic as that with which Russia governs Poland, or as that which was common in Venice under the Austrian rule."

There spoke a man definitely under the influence of the French Revolution.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BRISTOL TO LONDON

I DO not know how much Harmsworth earned by his pen in the year 1883, his eighteenth year, but I fancy it was not a very large sum. I do know that he lived frugally, denying himself all luxury, and imposing on himself an iron discipline. I know, too, that he drove himself mercilessly to work. His youth was already "lost among the years."

He is a pathetic figure, in some ways, this earnest-minded veteran of eighteen, with his most sensitive pride, and his most shy unselfishness. For one thing he possessed faith, in a world largely peopled by unbelievers; for another he gave of his very best to those who certainly disparaged his gifts. The articles which Harmsworth "hawked round" Fleet Street—articles on bicycling, for example, or on railway engines—struck the older journalist as merely "smart" or "catchpenny," whereas they seemed to their author to be both very sincere and very important.

Harmsworth actually believed in bicycles. He actually saw in them an instrument of human regeneration as potent as the Public Health Act or the Education Act. At a moment when distinguished members of the staffs of the older newspapers were asking one another, casually, whether they should or should not admit that bicycles existed at all, this

young man was filling obscure columns with statements to the effect that, very soon, the bicycle would "revolutionise modern life." The editors who published these statements probably regarded them as "good journalism"; I do not suppose that the idea entered their minds that their papers had, in reality, by publishing Harmsworth's articles, become the vehicles of a new gospel.

So it was, however, as these editors were destined to learn. For young Harmsworth was never, at any time, merely the "brilliant journalist" of his admirers and critics. He was, from the beginning to the end, a great amateur in journalism. Indeed, I think that journalism as such interested him less than is generally supposed. The real Harmsworth was a man with a message who happened to have been born with a *flair* for newspapers. From the very beginning he proclaimed his message in everything which he wrote.

And naturally, his message grew with him. At first it was merely the message of youth, which is always the same, however fresh and entrancing may be its accents. But gradually the individual tone became audible. This lad, who was so proud to be an Englishman, was prouder still to be a man. Manhood thrilled him, with its splendid courage, its patience, its perseverance, its faith in itself. And life—the opportunity of manhood—filled him with awe and wonder. How valuable life was, how rich and splendid a possession!

He proclaimed that doctrine in his way of living as well as in his way of writing. He loved the country, the birds, the face of Nature, and, till late in life, enjoyed going out to

look for nests in the Spring, but he loved his fellow beings more than these. His enthusiasm glowed for his bicycle, because it added so greatly to the scope and enjoyment of life, just as did his books and his music. He wanted to share his good fortune with the whole world. He was ready, too, as are all apostles, to do battle with doubters and unbelievers. The articles which he wrote breathed a challenge in every line.

Excellent journalism that ; just as the harangues of Peter the Hermit, or the proclamations of Napoleon to his soldiers, or the speeches of the Man of Birmingham, were excellent journalism. But not the "journalism" of the Fleet Street of 1883, with its uneventful leading articles and its deadly "reports." In the Fleet Street of 1883, journalists were men who were hired to write ; they were not men who challenged or commanded or compelled their readers.

Harmsworth seems to have been curiously blind to this fact ; he seems to have expected that his evangel would find a welcome among the acknowledged leaders of the profession. He seems to have thought, too, that deeds would convince those whom words had failed to convince.

That idea, perhaps, prompted him to undertake to ride his bicycle from Bristol to London—about 180 miles—and perhaps, as he rode, he imagined that the articles he meant to write about this great exploit would inspire others to follow his example. Unhappily, there is a limit to human endurance, even for pioneers. The lad had been living too frugally ; he had been denying himself too much. On this particular journey, during which rain fell in unceasing torrents, he

spent little or nothing upon food. He just managed to struggle to the journey's end, but that victory cost him dear. He was stricken down with a most severe attack of pneumonia.

The illness left his constitution impaired; and it threatened all the high hopes and endeavours to which he had given himself. But worse than this, it added to the burden of those whom he loved.

These were dark hours for young Harmsworth, and I think that his reference to the yoke which he bore in his youth relates to them particularly. For he was faced now with a more bitter struggle than any which he had formerly experienced. His doctor told him quite plainly that he could not continue the work in London which he had been doing. He must get away from London; he must rest; he must gather his strength again lest a worse thing even than pneumonia should befall him.

Most young fellows of nineteen, with others dependent on them, would have given way to despair in such circumstances. But this young fellow merely smiled and set his teeth. He promised to obey his doctor in so far as obedience was compatible with duty. He told his mother that he was confident of being able to win through, and seems to have inspired her anxious heart with new hope. He returned to his "freelancing," and Mr. Max Pemberton, who met him at this time on the steps of the British Museum, says that he was wearing "a black Inverness cape, such as was then fashionable in London, and a silk hat, immaculately glossy." Mr. Pemberton was just "down" from Cambridge, and was going into the reading-room of the British

Museum to get materials for an essay on Dickens, which he hoped to sell to some newspaper or magazine. He told his old friend about his essay. Harmsworth "laughed at the absurdity of the proceeding."

"No newspaper editor," he said, "will look at an article of that kind at this time of day. What you want to do is to get the news. Come along, and we will have a talk about it."

The upshot of that talk was that the essay on Dickens was placed, by Harmsworth, in the fire, and that Mr. Pemberton received the first of those astonishing expositions of the value and meaning of NEWS, with which the whole world of journalism was soon to become familiar.

Thereafter, the two friends set up house together in St. John's Wood, and, later, "at the foot of the Hampstead hills." Harmsworth remained very unfit and could not work hard.

"Almost every day," says Mr. Pemberton, "we arrayed ourselves in the best clothes that we had and sallied forth to brave the lions of Fleet Street in their dens.

" 'First impressions are everything' he (Harmsworth) would say to me, and when a hansom-cab driver of the old type hailed us his satisfaction was not concealed. 'We are all right,' he remarked one morning, 'the cabbies want us for a fare.' "

The friends met Robert Louis Stevenson on one of their excursions to the "lions' dens of Fleet Street"—in the office of a weekly paper called *Orange Blossoms*, to which Stevenson had brought the MS. of *Olalla*.

Money was far from plentiful. Harmsworth was writing

leaders for the *Morning Post*, but he got only 10s. 6d. a column for this work.

“And our hands being often idle, we spent long hours upon Hampstead Heath or the tennis court and wondered whither we were drifting.”

And then an event occurred which, in Mr. Pemberton’s opinion, was decisive. I give the account of it in his own words :

“We chanced to be walking down Farringdon Street upon our way to the Metropolitan Railway Station. We had visited the offices of *Society*, then occupying that very building which was subsequently to witness so many of my friend’s achievements ; and having failed to dispose of our goods our spirits were not of the best. It was at this critical moment that, chancing to pass a lofty building, upon the left-hand side of the road in Farringdon Street, I saw that it was the office of *Tit-Bits*. . . .

“ ‘ This fellow ’ (the proprietor of *Tit-Bits*), I said, ‘ must be a millionaire ; let us go up and see him.’

“And up we went into a great bare room upon the first floor, where the properties included an amiable-looking gentleman at his luncheon. A word and we discovered that he was the person we sought—the late Sir George Newnes, upon the very threshold of his brilliant career.

“ ‘ What do you want ? ’ he asked me.

“ ‘ To write an article for your paper,’ I said.

“ ‘ Upon what subject ? ’

“For a moment I was taken aback. A subject had not

occurred to me. Then, remembering the crazy nature of the building in which we stood, I said boldly :

“ ‘ I want to write an article about jerry-builders.’ ”

“ The article was accepted and later a registered letter arrived at the ‘ mean study at Hampstead ’ ; it contained three golden sovereigns and three shillings in orderly array. . . . I shall always say that this trifling episode influenced Alfred Harmsworth’s career as nothing which had hitherto happened to him. . . . Well do I remember him coming into my bedroom one morning and telling me why George Newnes was making so colossal a success :

“ ‘ The Board Schools,’ he said, ‘ are turning out hundreds of thousands of boys and girls annually who are anxious to read. They do not care for the ordinary newspaper. They have no interest in society, but they will read anything which is simple and is sufficiently interesting. The man who has produced this *Tit-Bits* has got hold of a bigger thing than he imagines. He is only at the very beginning of a development which is going to change the whole face of journalism. I shall try to get in with him. We could start one of these papers for a couple of thousand pounds and we ought to be able to find the money. At any rate I am going to make the attempt.’ ”

The attempt failed ; no one could be found ready to invest a penny piece in the enterprises of Alfred Harmsworth. And so the friends went on making their bricks without straw and the gallant boy, whose health remained exceedingly precarious, went on helping his mother to the very utmost of his ability.



And then, one day, there came an offer to Harmsworth to go to Coventry to help to edit and manage the publications of Messrs. Iliffe and Sons, proprietors of *The Bicycling News* and *The Cyclist*, to both of which papers the friends had been frequent contributors.

The ride from Bristol to London had not, after all, been a wild-goose chase !

## CHAPTER IX

### THE LYRE OF ADVENTURE

HIS new posts took Harmsworth away from London and from Fleet Street and so enabled him, at long last, to obey his doctor.

Coventry in that year, 1885, the year of Gordon's death at Khartoum, was not the Coventry of to-day. The city of Lady Godiva was chiefly concerned with making ribbons. The vast motor-car engineering works which now almost monopolise Coventry, lay then in the womb of the future. But the manufacture of bicycles had begun. The new member of the staff of *The Bicycling News* had thus come to the one place in England in which news about bicycles was most likely to be available.

The Iliffes, who owned *The Bicycling News*, were men of enterprise and foresight. They were also men of enthusiasm. They possessed a huge printing establishment and they were really interested in the subjects about which their publications afforded information. Harmsworth experienced the thrill of excitement which always comes to a man when he finds himself in a congenial atmosphere, the thrill which the young Lieutenant, Napoleon, experienced when he exchanged the bored idleness of the Military Academy at Paris for the vigorous activity of the La Fère Regiment of Artillery. In Fleet Street it had been necessary to please men of academic

mind, men untouched by the young eagerness of a new generation and a new vision of life ; at Coventry that young eagerness was in the very air. At Coventry men believed in the future just as passionately as, in Fleet Street, men believed in the past.

Harmsworth's pulses quickened ; the sense of exhaustion which had afflicted him in London began to pass away. Here were pioneers, the makers of a new world, labouring at their tremendous task. Here was Romance, the very spirit of life. *The Bicycling News* might discourse to its readers of frames and wheels and pedals, of ball bearings and rim brakes and chains ; these were only the strings of the new lyre of adventure. From the vibrating strings, rising and falling in haunting cadences, came the melody of action, the song of the open road promising release and regeneration. Like the old knights Youth should fare forth once more, trustily mounted, to learn the joy of wide uplands and great spaces, the pangs of wind and rain and sunlight, the loneliness of evening, the ecstasy of the dawn.

Harmsworth struck the lyre of Adventure with deft fingers. His articles, written with deepest sincerity, brought new readers to the paper ; his powers of organization afforded these new readers new delight. He learned the whole business of printing, just as a musician, with the love of music in his soul, learns the whole technique of his chosen instrument, eagerly, with passionate swiftness. The early impressions of the *Henley House Magazine* days were tested and tried out in practice ; new impressions were added to them. Harmsworth learned not only how to write, but also how to print ; and not only how to print but also how to create

pages of print so that these pages should "leap" to the reader's eye and seize on his interest.

Most people who have had no personal experience of newspaper-making are unaware that it is a most subtle and a most difficult craft. To the ordinary mind print is just—print. To the mind of young Harmsworth, print seemed, on the contrary, a medium almost as sensitive as are the pigments of an artist. He saw associations between typesetting and authorship, between the nature of an article and the manner in which it was presented. He began to understand the immense power of suggestion which rests in headlines and "cross-headings." He began to think in pages as well as in columns and lines.

There is a real distinction between the column and the page of any paper. For the column gains or loses importance according to its position in the page. A column can be effectively "hidden" in the very middle of a page; again, a column, or even a single paragraph, can be effectively "shown" in the same position. A given bunch of articles, if "set up" in the right kind of type, and placed in the right way on the page devoted to them, becomes something different, strangely but really different, from the same bunch of articles wrongly "set up" and wrongly "shown."

"Right" and "wrong," in this instance, however, are relative terms. There are still journalists, distinguished journalists, who dislike or despise the craft of the page-maker. They argue that an article should stand on its merits and that readers should not be led, or induced, to read by any kind of artifice. Such men seemed to Harmsworth strangely uncomprehending. For his sole idea was to convey the contents

of his paper swiftly and easily to the reader's mind. "Right" page-making, in his view, was the sort of page-making which most effectively achieved this object. Indeed, he declared once in my hearing that right page-making corresponded exactly to clear and forcible speaking.

"Does anybody," he asked, "prefer a monotonous, indistinct voice to a musical and distinct voice?"

With this man, as I have said, it was the message which mattered; the manner, he resolved, must suit the message and expedite it. The only measure of the manner was its "message-conveying" power.

Print and pages, however, are not the only materials of journalism. There is writing also: the form of writing, and its method. Harmsworth learned at Coventry that descriptions of action are more convincing than essays about action. He learned, also, that a description of an action can be made to convey almost any idea about that action. His own bicycle ride from Bristol to London conveyed, for example, half a dozen prophesies and morals, and that "without a word spoken." The readers of *The Bicycling News* heard, as they read, the crisp rip of tyres on sunny highways!

## CHAPTER X

### “UNION IS STRENGTH”

THE owner of *The Bicycling News*, Mr. William Iliffe, began to realize that his new editor was a “remarkable young man.” He took a keen personal interest in Harmsworth and did everything in his power to attach him permanently to the firm ; before the lad was twenty-one he had actually been offered a partnership.

It was a brilliant offer, for the firm of Iliffe owned, in addition to *The Bicycling News* and *The Cyclist*, the *Midland Daily Telegraph*—an important newspaper. Nevertheless, Harmsworth declined the partnership.

This decision cost him, undoubtedly, great searchings of heart. For here was an offer of real, solid prosperity at a moment when prosperity was very much to be desired. As a member of the firm of Iliffe he could, reasonably, look forward to the possession of a safe and sufficient living, and even to wealth. But he seems to have felt that the Coventry firm was not the medium best suited to the expression of his ideas. Dreams of a larger enterprise troubled his mind and gave him no rest. Already, since he had come to Coventry, he had written two little books entitled, respectively, *One Thousand Ways to Earn a Living*, and *All About Our Railways*, for Sir George Newnes, of *Tit-Bits*, and he had also edited other books for the same publisher. These books were

designed to reach the immense new body of readers whom the educational policy of Mr. Chamberlain and his friends had begun to create. They appealed to youth, to its energy and enthusiasm and courage. They proclaimed, crudely perhaps, but nevertheless in ringing accents, the high achievement and the still higher destiny of mankind—especially the English-speaking portion of it.

I have heard these books criticised as examples of “brutal and arrogant materialism.” That, I am convinced, is an unfair estimate of their nature. They were quite unpretentious and they dealt only with practical matters. But they were inspired by a generous admiration of those qualities of industry and patience which lie at the foundation of all human accomplishment. Harmsworth revealed his faith in action as the means of salvation. He urged his readers to serve their generation by working hard and he promised them, largely by implication, that such hard work would make them whole. This doctrine habitually disappoints the enthusiasm of those who demand a sentimental basis for their activities; but simple folk understand it well. It was to simple folk that Harmsworth was addressing himself.

Meanwhile these same simple folk were witnessing, with breathless interest, a mighty struggle between the two greatest English statesmen of that day—Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain—a struggle which was destined to exercise immense influence over the lives of multitudes of men. There had been a General Election and Mr. Gladstone had won it. But his victory over the Conservatives was indecisive because he did not possess a sufficient majority in the House

of Commons to make him independent of "The Irish Vote," then about eighty strong. Mr. Parnell, the leader of the Irish Nationalists, could, by directing his followers to vote with the Opposition, turn the Government out of office. In these circumstances, though not necessarily because of these circumstances, Mr. Gladstone introduced his famous bill to give Home Rule to Ireland, and so, in fact, to take the government of that country out of the hands of the Anglo-Irish and the Scottish-Irish and place it in the hands of the Irish-Irish.

The plan filled immense numbers of Englishmen and Scotsmen—to say nothing of Ulstermen—with dismay. Was Ireland, it was asked, to be handed over to the Fenians, the mortal and sworn enemies of England? Was Ireland to be ruled in future by the Pope? Home Rule, cried the Protestants once again, is Rome Rule. Home Rule, cried the Conservatives, is Rebel Rule, the rule of cut-throats and moonlighters and assassins.

Mr. Gladstone answered these most violent critics with deep conviction. Home Rule, he declared, was a measure of justice, that and nothing more. For surely it was just that the majority in Ireland should rule their own country. He was answered that, in this special case, the ordinary reasoning did not apply, seeing that the twin gulfs of religion, and of nationality, in this special case, separated the majority from the minority.

"It is obvious," cried the opponents of Home Rule, "that the Irish-Irish, once they possess the power, will persecute the Anglo-Irish and the Scottish-Irish and will



favour the Roman Catholic Religion at the expense of the Protestant."

There was substance in this contention, and it would have been well for Mr. Gladstone, and for the Liberal Party, if that substance had been weighed. But the followers of Mr. Parnell were determined to have "all or nothing"; they refused to listen to any suggestion that Ulster, the Protestant north of Ireland, should not be included in the new arrangement. Mr. Gladstone yielded to them, and by that act of yielding lost the support of Mr. Chamberlain.

"Gentlemen," Mr. Chamberlain declared, in an address to his followers in Cardiff, "your ancestors have met great difficulties and dangers, and have confronted them successfully. They have arrested the tyranny of Kings; they have borne without flinching the terrors of a persecuting Church; they have, again and again, rolled back the tide of foreign invasion from our shores; they have overcome the most powerful combination of their foes; and now will you, their descendants—you, upon whose shoulders the burden of this Empire has fallen—will you be so poor-spirited as to break up your ancient Constitution, to destroy your venerable Parliament and to surrender your well-earned supremacy to the vile and ignoble force of anarchy and disorder?"

This was very unlike the voice of the Man of Birmingham, as England at that time was accustomed to hear it. The Empire, even a year or two before, had not, apparently,

interested Mr. Chamberlain at all. Why then this passionate opposition to Home Rule and to Gladstone?

The answer is that the Man of Birmingham had come to see that the social reforms which he desired so ardently could be obtained only if England remained a great world-power. England's immense and growing population actually lived on world-trade; English wages were paid by all the nations of the world. Therefore anything which tended to diminish English world-power tended to the impoverishment and enslavement of the English people. In Mr. Chamberlain's view, Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill meant the separation of Ireland from Great Britain and probably also civil war in Ireland. It meant, that is to say, since the anti-British influences in Ireland were exceedingly strong, a severe, perhaps a fatal diminution of the power of England to hold and maintain her place among the great nations. “Home Rule and home comforts,” on this showing, were incompatible with one another. Only by way of world-power and world-trade could the common folk achieve their birthright.

“Union is strength,” cried the Man of Birmingham, and his slogan convinced England.

These were great days, undoubtedly, for young Harmsworth, the fiery Radical. Harmsworth had believed, from his cradle, that Union, the Union of Great Britain and Ireland, was strength; his radicalism, from the beginning, had possessed an Imperial flavour. Mr. Chamberlain's opposition to the Home Rule Bill seemed to him, therefore, both natural and providential. Mr. Chamberlain's imperialism and Mr. Chamberlain's radicalism were, in the view of the editor of the *Bicycling News*, merely different aspects of one and the

same idea. Harmsworth became joined, in spirit, to the Man of Birmingham, the man of the common folk.

But these larger enthusiasms did not turn him from the project which never ceased, at this period, to agitate his mind. By one means or another he was determined to found a publishing business of his own.

## CHAPTER XI

### A POUND A WEEK

AS usual, perseverance won. There came to Harmsworth, in the year 1887, two years after his arrival in Coventry, an offer of the loan of a substantial sum of money.

This offer was accepted on the instant. The young man resigned his post with the Iliffes and returned at once to London. Within a very short space of time, he had taken an office in Paternoster Square, under the very shadow of St. Paul's, and began operations.

"One day," recounts Mr. Pemberton, "I mounted a flight of stairs in a dingy old building in Paternoster Square, and there was asked by a very small office-boy what was my business. Before I could answer, Alfred Harmsworth himself appeared and greeted me with his accustomed warmth. . . . The room in which I stood was cheerful enough. The proprietor, I remember, wore a morning-coat suit, in a pleasant shade of fawn, and had a rose in his button-hole. He seemed very happy, though he did not disguise from me that the business was not very flourishing."

The idea, Harmsworth explained to his old friend, on which he was working, was to publish in England an American sporting magazine called *Outing*, and also a little technical

paper of his own, *The Private Schoolmaster*. In addition he meant to produce a series of popular books "upon informative lines," to be called the "All About Series," and to be sold at 1s. per copy.

" 'Why not a popular book about Cambridge, my dear Max ? ' he said. ' Nothing about tripos or that sort of thing, but just a popular account of everyday life up there, and especially of the games, a book not unlike *A Day of my Life at Eton*. ' "

Mr. Pemberton does not seem to have been deeply impressed by the suggestion, though he states that he acted on it. His effort, however, was wasted, for within twelve months, his friend had forgotten all about popular shilling books, and was immersed in the great scheme which, for three years, had dominated his thoughts. The books were a mere expedient to hasten the realization of the scheme.

Realization, as it happened, was not due entirely, or even in large measure, to the books ; it was made possible, on the contrary, by a second loan of money, arranged by a leader-writer on the *Daily Telegraph*, named Mr. Markwick. The lender was a retired naval officer.

Harmsworth had no misgivings ; he felt sure of himself now, and he succeeded, as he always succeeded, in inspiring others with his confidence. He had fallen in love, long before, with a playmate of his early days, Miss Mary Elizabeth Milner, the daughter of a West Indian merchant, and he now proposed that they should be married. Miss Milner, who was living in Oxfordshire, decided to take the risk. The marriage took place on April 11, 1888.

The bride and bridegroom addressed their minds to the great new venture in which both of them so firmly and passionately believed. Harmsworth was convinced that the public, like himself, was thirsting for information on all manner of subjects. He meant to supply information—to order. A little paper called *Notes and Queries*, which still continues its useful and distinguished career, had given him his first idea; the anxious inquirers to *The Bicycling News* had made the idea actual. Youth and enthusiasm did the rest. On the second of June, 1888, the British public was invited—mostly by hawkers—to buy a penny paper in a deep yellow cover entitled *Answers to Correspondents*. Those who bought the paper, and they were not a large company, were regaled by articles on “Ancient London,” “Silk Stockings,” and “How to Live on Nothing a Year.”

It may be frankly confessed that there was nothing very original about this first number of *Answers*. The paper was a more or less faithful reproduction of *Tit-Bits*. Nor did great originality characterise the succeeding issues—though Mr. Pemberton has put it on record that, in the interest of the new journal, he descended to the deeps of the sea in a diving-bell, and ascended to the heavens by way of a church steeple.

Harmsworth was disappointed. He realized that he had not succeeded in capturing the public imagination; his paper was not, in theatrical phrase, “getting over the foot-lights.” And that, as he saw clearly, meant failure, for he owed money, and had heavy charges to meet. Some years ago I happened to encounter a legal man who was acting for a firm with whom, at this time, Harmsworth had dealings.

He told me that he well remembered a visit which the young fellow paid to his office.

"Harmsworth, whom I had not seen before, made a great impression on me," the lawyer said. "He was so frank, so sincere and so charming in his manner. When he discussed business he put all his cards on the table, telling me that he felt sure of ultimate success. I believed him because he so completely won my confidence."

The young man, however, in spite of his faith in ultimate success, was considerably worried. He was not himself "much of a business man," and he seems to have felt that the business side of *Answers to Correspondents* was capable of improvement. He succeeded in persuading his younger brother, Harold, the present Lord Rothermere, to join him as business manager. That, as he soon discovered, was one of the wisest steps which he ever took. For, in a very short space of time, his brother Harold, by the exercise of those qualities of financial genius with which everyone is now familiar, converted a balance sheet that had, in Mr. Pembrerton's phrase, "scarcely shown a profit," into a balance sheet "with a return of two thousand pounds a year."

The crisis was over; it was possible now to think ahead with an easy mind. Harmsworth set his fertile brain to discover some means of announcing his presence to the vast, indifferent public, whose ear he so greatly desired to catch. He had no illusions. He knew that the circulation of a newspaper corresponds exactly, in point of importance, to the circulation of the blood in the body of a human being. Circulation is life. In the case of a newspaper it is, equally with print and paper, the material of existence. A newspaper

which has no readers counts for nothing ; its message is still-born.

Harmsworth had believed that circulation could be built up rapidly on contents alone ; experience had shown him that other methods of advertisement were necessary. He must set the public talking about *Answers to Correspondents*, or *Answers*, as the paper was now called. He must imprint that name, that word, on the public mind, so that it should become as familiar as the names of the established journals. In other words, the name *Answers* must be associated with some simple, universal idea, some idea common to all men, and pleasing to all men. *Answers* must come to stand as a symbol of home or happiness, of health or fortune. It must suggest some bond between itself and its readers, and thus become the confidential friend of its readers.

“Suppose that I were to offer £1 a week for life to the reader who . . .”

He who had borne so bravely the yoke in his youth realized in a flash the immense attraction of such a prize. A pound a week was the standard rate of pay for working folk ; it was independence, the object of the hopes and dreams of all. Everybody would realize, instantly, the advantage to himself or herself of such an acquisition.

The idea came, it is said, while Harmsworth was in bed, on an October morning in 1889. It filled his mind in an instant as every new idea, at its birth, filled his mind. He began to plan at once how he could put it into practice. The difficulty, as he quickly perceived, lay in the nature of the competition for which the prize of £1 a week was to be given. Difficult competitions attract few competitors, and he desired



to attract hundreds, thousands of competitors. The competition, therefore, must be easy. *Yet there must be only one winner.*

It grew obvious that only guesswork of some sort would answer the requirements. It grew obvious, too, that ordinary guesswork must lead to failure and disappointment. Hundreds of competitors, for example, would be sure to guess the winner of the Derby, if that race formed the basis of the competition. And you cannot divide £1 a week among hundreds. The same objection applied to guesses about the weather, and about nearly all the uncertain events and circumstances of life.

*But it did not apply to guesses about large sums of money.*

Money is infinitely variable. It is also capable of exact expression. Harmsworth's mind leaped to the solution he was seeking. The winner of the prize of £1 a week for life should, he announced, be the man or woman who guessed most accurately the amount of bullion in the Bank of England on a given date.

That announcement thrilled the whole country, as Harmsworth had foreseen that it would thrill the whole country. Even the severe strikes which were then dislocating industry proved a less exciting topic of conversation. In thousands of offices and trains and buses, in country villages, in most remote hamlets, the offer of *Answers* was discussed and canvassed. Millions of people spoke the word *Answers*; hundreds of thousands bought or borrowed the "golden one," as it was called.

Before twelve months had passed, the profit of £2,000 a year had been converted into a profit of £20,000 a year. *Answers* had won its circulation.

## CHAPTER XII

“NOT A DIRTY ‘BOB’”

THE older journals, naturally, took no notice whatever of this “ineffable vulgarity.” But there was consternation in the ranks of the rivals of *Answers*. Very quickly the cry was raised that Harmsworth was inciting the public to “a game of chance” and so was breaking the laws against gambling.

The authorities were compelled to look into the matter—which meant more publicity for *Answers* and more talk about *Answers*. The decision was reached that the great guessing competition was illegal and a second competition, on the same lines, which was just about to be decided, was forbidden.

The ban came too late, however, to do *Answers* and its resourceful proprietor any injury. Harmsworth’s object was achieved; an immense public had become interested in him and was ready to receive his message. Money was available for further enterprises.

The nature of these further enterprises wrung groans of horror and reprobation from hosts of sober-minded folk. *Comic Cuts* was the first of them. I remember the early numbers of that engaging halfpenny paper—the first halfpenny paper ever published in this country—very well because, as a boy, I bought them myself, despite the grave disapproval of my good father. They were full of schoolboy

jokes about policemen. What astonished me most at the time, I think, was that the writers and artists on the staff of *Comic Cuts* seemed to regard the natural wickedness and depravity of boys as a good rather than as a bad thing. It had not occurred to me before that "bad boys" might, after all, possess some saving graces. My second impression was that *Comic Cuts* was infinitely more amusing than the "boys' books" with which I was provided by an indulgent authority.

Harmsworth, I imagine, produced *Comic Cuts* because he thought that he could sell it. But I believe that the bad boys who always triumphed over the policemen must, nevertheless, have given him satisfaction. And I have often thought that he deserves high regard for having perceived, so long ago, the goodness of "badness" in boys. The same idea, a few years later, was to give the world the Boy Scouts, that noble inspiration of Sir Robert Baden-Powell. The secret of the success of the Scout movement is its recognition of the rights of boyhood. The Chief Scout enlisted the "badness" of a whole world of eager lads in the service of humanity. I am far from suggesting that this great enterprise owed anything at all to poor little humble *Comic Cuts*. But I do know that I, for one, caught my first glimpse of a truth which has changed the whole face of boyhood, in its lurid pages. Harmsworth, in those far-off days, sold me a paper which I wanted to read. He addressed me in all my human weakness and wickedness as a person at once rational and respectable. And I liked it.

The readers of *Answers* also "liked it." For those readers, no less than the "bad boys," were accustomed to

be lectured on their shortcomings rather than to be encouraged and interested. Even in the year 1890 “ the poor,” as they were called, were regarded very much as boys and young women were regarded.

Harmsworth, on the contrary, sympathised with the poor, with boys, and with young women. *Answers* and *Comic Cuts* soon found a companion in *Forget-me-not*, a little paper which proclaimed quite emphatically that it was but natural that young girls should fall in love and dream their dreams. *Forget-me-not* was the *Comic Cuts* of girlhood and young womanhood, and its astonishing success proclaimed the fact that girlhood and young womanhood were eagerly awaiting its advent.

It is the easiest thing in the world to sneer at these enterprises. It is easy, too, to hold up hands of horror against them, and to say that Harmsworth depraved the public taste with his “ vulgar sheets.” Criticism of this kind, however, is quite futile. Harmsworth did not affect the public taste in the smallest degree; he merely catered for it. To men and women, to boys and girls, he spoke in language which men and women and boys and girls could understand.

But he did much more than this. He asserted the importance of the emotional side of human nature, and defended its virtue. His appeal to boys was addressed to their natural instincts; his appeal to women rested again on nature. Thus even *Comic Cuts* and *Forget-me-not* spoke their challenges to the existing order. To the Greeks they were foolishness itself; but to those whom they reached they served as a medium of ideas—of the new ideas of which, in the great world, Joseph Chamberlain was the mouthpiece.

“How to promote the greater happiness of the masses of the people”—I am quoting again Mr. Chamberlain’s speech in Birmingham in 1885—“how to increase their enjoyment of life—that is the problem of the future.”

The new ideas which Harmsworth’s papers carried into every home in the land were, first of all, the idea of the bigness of life, its value for its own sake and its value as the “raw material of living.” Men and women and children were encouraged to be themselves without fear, and to realize that the world belonged to them and to their enthusiasms. The sickly sentiment of the children’s hymn—

“I’m but a stranger here,  
Heaven is my home . . .”

was controverted in every line of the new journals. “It is good to be alive,” cried Harmsworth to his million readers—for that number was soon reached—“make the most of life and enjoy it to the top of your bent. Be boys ; be girls ; be men ; be women ; it is your birthright. But over and above that be British boys and girls and men and women. For that also is your birthright.”

The late Mr. Lovat Fraser, that most able and most kind of men, said to me on the day on which Northcliffe’s will was published :

“Has it struck you that among all these millions which he has left there is not one dirty ‘bob’ ?”

It was true. Northcliffe, in his boyhood days, may have preached a crude enough gospel in a crude enough fashion. But his gospel was clean, wholesome, patriotic. No child ever imbibed low sentiments at that overflowing stream.

## CHAPTER XIII

### “ PIGS IN CLOVER ”

SUCCESS, overwhelming and incredible, had arrived, as it were, overnight. The whole journalistic world “sat up and rubbed its eyes.”

How had the miracle been achieved? How had these mere lads secured, in two years, an annual profit of well over £100,000?

Editors, and proprietors too, bought the “Harmsworth Press” and examined it. They could not see anything so very wonderful about it. It was bright, of course; but so were hosts of its rivals. There was, however, as the public realized—unconsciously—a difference between the Harmsworth publications and all the journals which competed against them. That difference lay to some extent in the quality of the articles; but it lay also in the typesetting and in the page-making. The editor of the *Henley House Magazine* and of *The Bicycling News* had not wasted his experience. The pages of *Answers*, even the early *Answers* did, in fact, “leap to the eye,” and they conveyed, every week, the impression that they were vastly rich in new and thrilling incident. A friend of Harmsworth’s told me that he once heard the young man say that his object, from week to week, was to make his readers exclaim :

“Thank goodness we live in such a wonderful and exciting world ! ”

Every device of advertisement was made use of to increase the sense of wonder and excitement. One day—or so the late Mr. S. J. Pryor told me—a man called at Harmsworth’s office and showed him a puzzle which he had just invented. It consisted of a cardboard box with a glass lid and having a small “pen” in the centre into which some little china balls could, by the exercise of great dexterity and patience, be made to run. The puzzle was called “Pigs in Clover”—the balls were the “pigs,” the “clover” was that part of the box lying outside of the pen.

“Will you buy this puzzle ? ”

Harmsworth took the box in his hand and tried his own skill at getting the “pigs” out of “clover.” Then he rose from his chair and carried the box to a weighing-machine. He weighed it and a look of hesitation came into his eyes.

“May I have a day or two to decide ? ”

The time was granted. Harmsworth set his brains to discover some means of making the “pigs” lighter—for he saw that, if the puzzle was to be a success, it must go by the penny post. The china balls were too heavy. A few days later he happened to be passing a little “sweetie shop” in the window of which was a jar of sugar balls. He entered the shop and bought some of the balls.

These sugar “pigs” were much lighter than the china “pigs.” The riddle was solved.

That puzzle, which several people had refused to buy,

amused the whole country and is still, in modern forms, a source of interest. It achieved the double purpose of bringing Harmsworth and its inventor a substantial fortune and of keeping *Answers*, which issued it, daily and hourly before the public.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LITTLE BRITISH WORKSHOP

AND now, at last, the Man with a Message could begin to look about him and prepare himself for larger enterprises. Harmsworth began to travel on the Continent; he also visited America and made the acquaintance of the chief newspaper men of that country. America fascinated him from the very first hour.

For here was the freedom of manhood and womanhood after which he had hankered all the days of his life. And here too was the joy of a new thing because it was new. Harmsworth must have realized with a pang of regret that his mind and his methods much more nearly corresponded to those of the citizens of the United States than to those of the subjects of Queen Victoria.

Nevertheless these journeys of his, in spite of their revelations of the extreme conservatism of England, strengthened his sense of national pride. It hurt him to find that, in his special sphere of work, his own country was far behind other countries; but that discovery only whetted his eagerness for reform.

When he returned home he took his readers, old and young, into his confidence. These readers numbered well over a million; it was calculated that, at this time, about six million people saw the Harmsworth publications—for each

paper is read by about six persons. *Harmsworth, in other words, was able to speak to one-sixth of the entire British nation.* Not only so, but this immense multitude listened to him with the closest attention and with real sympathy. He had won his way to their confidence.

The views of the lad who saw a new romance in railway engines and bicycles became the views of millions of his fellow-countrymen. Millions of British lads and lassies began to develop a new, deep pride of race and began to think of the British Empire as their Empire and of the Union Jack as their flag.

I say "began to think," for the truth is that the imperial idea had not, in those days, reached the common folk. Disraeli's Oriental imperialism was largely a class attitude. The men who "brought the Empire to the cottage door" were Joseph Chamberlain and Alfred Harmsworth. And, of the two, Harmsworth had the larger influence because he spoke to youth in the accents of youth and because he was, even in his twenties, the greatest master of publicity whom this country—perhaps this world—has ever known.

"There is nothing new about publicity," Harmsworth declared in a speech delivered in 1913, "but the extension and development of publicity. Like agriculture it is an old, old art in a process of intensification. When Rameses went through Egypt stamping his mark on the national monuments he was a very early exemplar of one of the worst uses of publicity—the personal notoriety form of it, from which, even to-day, we do not appear to be free.

"When William's Normans duplicated castles throughout

England they were publishing the fact of power. The church bell calling attention to the service within, the muezzin summoning the faithful at eventide to the mosque, the regimental march throughout a district and the stationing of recruiting offices in the market-places were all ancient forms of publicity. Not less stirring than the wireless publicity accorded to the heroes of the *Titanic* were the garlanded coaches of the last century carrying from village to village and town to town the news of our victory and our great loss at Trafalgar and the thrill of Waterloo. . . .

“We English have been slower and staidier than most peoples in developing advertising; we have avoided the pitfalls of the pioneers and I am not sorry, therefore, for our lateness, though it is time that we bestirred ourselves. Everyone, and all civilized peoples, know that whatever we make in this little British workshop is the best. Our reputation throughout the world is that our goods are sold less cleverly than those of others, pushed less vigorously, less attractively packed, but that they are the best. That fact is our real national stock-in-trade.”

The “little British workshop” idea was developed and reiterated in everyone of the Harmsworth papers. The readers of these papers felt that they were working in the world’s eye, they felt that they belonged to a superior breed; and they experienced a rich sense of expanded personality. Nor was this idea confined to the male readers. Harmsworth is the discoverer of the latter-day “Englishman’s home.” In *Forget-me-not* he provided for unmarried girls; *Home Chat* is his earliest appeal to motherhood.

That appeal enjoyed, and still enjoys, immense success. For the older newspapers and periodicals utterly neglected women, other than society women. There was no recognition in the Press of the vital work of wife and mother; no help of any kind was afforded to the housewife; her ideas and her enthusiasms left Fleet Street as cold as ice.

Harmsworth saw and wondered. In a few brief years he brought women into the world of events; he made citizens of them; he threw open to them the narrow doors of the "little British workshop." His new journalism became the most cherished influence of tens of thousands of humble homes. In the year 1912 Northcliffe was the chief guest at the annual dinner of the Society of Women Journalists.

"I have had," he declared at that dinner, "no more loyal, no more sympathetic, no more courageous comrades than the women who have fought my fights with me. Some of us here are fortunate in having taken part in the beginning of one of the greatest economic changes of these latter times—the entrance of women into the sphere of active public life. . . .

"Your powers of quick observation greatly excel ours. Then, though your sympathy with the poor and the suffering may not be greater than ours, it is certainly more often evoked, and we know that much of the great attention that is now being paid to the housing and general condition of the poor has been aroused largely by the pens of women—professional journalists and others. . . .

"More than 300 ladies are engaged, directly and indirectly, in the active production of my newspapers and

magazines. . . . The feminine influence in the world's Press has at least doubled the extent of that Press. . . .

"Women's influence in Fleet Street has been a good one. I have compared with amazement the old and the new, and am proud of the clean and independent Press of to-day. To the woman reader, who has been created by the woman writer, I attribute not a little of the elimination of crime, indecency, 'puffery' and mournful accounts of the last meals of the condemned which adorned the leading morning papers until very, very recently."

The "little British workshop" idea suggested, and was intended to suggest, the idea of a whole world of customers. Englishmen began to look at the map and to enjoy looking at it. They saw that map splashed all over with the scarlet of England. They saw the trade routes of England's ships spreading from the "workshop" as the strands of a web extend from its centre. They began to speak of "markets," using that word in a sense in which they had not formerly used it. A curious exaltation filled their spirits.

You may see the same spirit in every normal lad about the age when boyhood grows old and manhood awakens. It is composed of eagerness and of timidity, and its first expressions are always startling. The lad oversteps himself, he plunges. His assertion is in proportion to his shyness. And older folk who have forgotten their own youth are frequently offended.

"What a bumptious boy!" they say.

Harmsworth and Chamberlain between them made the

common folk of England, just coming to man's estate, extraordinarily bumptious.

"We have," declared Mr. Chamberlain about this time, "to carry civilization, British justice, British law : we have to carry religion and Christianity to millions and millions of people who, until our advent, have lived in ignorance and in bitter conflict and whose territories have fallen to us to develop. That is our duty. It is a Christian duty."

The words, to-day, have a curiously distant sound. Indeed, to-day, they convey that pathos which attaches always to the splendid, if crude, enthusiasm of youth. But thirty years ago they were an evangel—in that queer dawning of real democracy in which, without a smile, vast audiences of religious folk sang, from their hearts :

" Shall we whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high  
To these poor folk benighted  
The lamp of truth deny ? "

and in which imperialism and the labours of missionaries in the various " foreign fields " were regarded as the secular and the spiritual aspects of the same sacred duty.

Those, however, who are inclined to sneer at " Jingoism " should remember that the bumptious boy in the " little British workshop " was only a boy—for English democracy, contrary to the general opinion, is a hundred years younger than American or French democracy. Jingoism is a healthy sign in young people, a healthier sign by far than precocious wisdom and mature judgment. To Alfred Harmsworth,

more than to any other man, belongs the credit of having taught the "new democracy" to know and to love England, to be proud of England and to be ready to save her.

He alone could reach the mass of the young folk of the nation. It lay within his power, in those days, to impart brave, bold, manly ideas or to become a mere stirrer-up of strife. He gave of his very best: a father whose son had imbibed from his master the ideas which this man broadcast over England would have had small cause to complain.

## CHAPTER XV

### “THAT TOUCH OF MODERNITY”

MR. GLADSTONE'S Home Rule Bill was rejected by the English people in the General Election of 1892, though, with the Irish vote, Gladstone had a majority of 40. That rejection may, perhaps, be taken as the earliest sign of the coming of the “little British workshop” idea. The new democracy was certainly not going to see the Union Jack “torn to pieces” before its eyes at a moment when every boyish instinct of its heart cried out for expansion and growth. “Away with the Fenians!” cried the English common folk. “Away with the rule of priests and Pope! Union is strength!”

Mr. Chamberlain, speaking in the House of Commons just after the election, and speaking now as a bitter opponent of his old chief, Mr. Gladstone, made reference to Egypt and to the proposal that England should leave that country.

“I do not believe,” he cried, “that democracies are anything but keenly sensitive to the honour and interest of the nation to which they belong, and I do not believe that the British nation will favour a policy of scuttle.”

These words recall irresistibly Napoleon's great address to the democracy of France at the beginning of the



nineteenth century, just after he had made peace with England :

“ We must, above all,” Napoleon declared, “ consecrate the great principle of the French Revolution, which is civil liberty ; that is to say, equal justice in every branch. . . . After those results there is one thing more which must be maintained with equal vigour, and that is the greatness of France.” . . .

Mr. Chamberlain, as I have tried to show, was under the influence of the ideas of the French Revolution ; so also was Harmsworth ; and so also, now in 1892, were the English people.

“ Chamberlain,” wrote a Frenchman who had observed him closely, “ marks the second stage of democracy—where it has the mission and the duty to rebuild.” He has “ that touch of modernity which makes of him the first interpreter and the sole possible regulator of the needs and the passions of the democracy.”

These words might have been written about Harmsworth. But no one seems to have realized, in the year 1892, that the proprietor of *Answers* and *Comic Cuts* and *Forget-me-not* was a considerable figure—though, queerly enough, both Mr. Gladstone and Lord Randolph Churchill spoke words of praise of *Answers*, which they found “ wholesome and instructive.” The newspaper world looked on Harmsworth as a “ saucy boy ” who, by a series of journalistic pranks, had managed to make a fortune. The “ serious journalists ” of the day regarded him as an irresponsible fellow, whose

influence was definitely bad. He was, they said, debasing the public taste—which, being interpreted, meant, tempting the public away from the writings of the “serious journalists.” “This man,” declared the “serious journalists,” “is nothing; he represents nothing; there is no moral force behind him. His enthusiasms are concerned with such silly trifles as bicycles and diving-bells and electric telegraphs.” . . .

On February 13, 1893, Mr. Gladstone introduced his new Home Rule Bill into the House of Commons amid a scene of tremendous excitement. King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, was present, and so were King George and Queen Mary, the last seated behind the grille in the ladies’ gallery. The debates which followed are among the bitterest in British political history, for the old democracy, the democracy of the upper middle class and of a sprinkling of the aristocrats—the Whigs—was going down before the blows of the new democracy—the democracy of the common folk, supported, strangely enough, by the Tories. Mr. Chamberlain gloried in his nationalism :

“I, and those who agree with me,” he cried, “believe in the expansion of the Empire, and we are not ashamed to confess that we have that feeling; we are not at all troubled by the accusation of ‘Jingoism.’ ”

Nor did accusations of a lack of moral purpose at all trouble Harmsworth. His hands were full of work, and his mind was leaping to new enterprises on behalf of the Englishman’s home and the Englishman’s Empire. While the Home Rule passion was at its height the ex-editor of *The*

*Bicycling News* betook himself to France to see the mechanically propelled vehicles which Lavassor and others were then constructing. He was shown, among other new things, a motor bicycle which he insisted on mounting :

“It rewarded him but ill,” Mr. Pemberton recounts. “Having mounted and started it, he found that he could not stop it ; and after careering round a race track and through a fence, he subsequently arrived in the middle of a field, where he thought it was time, willy-nilly, to descend. On the following day the same machine was mounted and ridden by a young Frenchman, who, unfortunately, fell with the machine on top of him and was burned to death.”

That disaster did not daunt Harmsworth. He bought one of the early Panhard cars—a six horse-power vehicle—and kept it in Paris, because, at that period, it was illegal to drive a mechanically propelled vehicle in England unless a man with a red flag was sent on in front of it.

But though he kept his car in Paris, he did not fail to tell England about it. In the ringing accents of *The Bicycling News* days, his readers heard that the age of the road engine had arrived, and that an immense revolution in travel, a revolution as great as that wrought by the steam engine, was at hand. As usual, Harmsworth spoke from his heart. He had thrilled as he rushed along the highways of France in his new car and tasted again the wild liberty of the highway. That delight belonged, he felt instinctively, to the same order of emotion as his delight in the “little British workshop,” in the “Ideal Home,” and in the coming of the common folk to the enjoyment of life.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE WHITE ELEPHANT

ON the 3rd of March, 1894, Mr. Gladstone, whose Home Rule Bill had been defeated by the House of Lords, resigned the Prime Ministership and retired from politics. The "Grand Old Man" had still four years to live; nevertheless, his resignation marked the end of an epoch. The Old World was dead; the New World had come to its manhood.

The Conservative party, thanks to Mr. Chamberlain's association with it on the Home Rule question and to the eager inspiration of the young democracy, was gaining strength and influence every day. It was enormously active and militant, and it had actually spent £300,000 on a London evening newspaper which it owned—the *Evening News*.

Neither popularity nor money, however, can take the place of journalism. The *Evening News* was a dismal failure, and its losses were truly overwhelming. The party managers came, reluctantly, to the conclusion that they must get rid of the "white elephant."

This decision reached the ears of a young journalist named Kennedy Jones, who was then assisting Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., to edit the *Sun*. "K.J.," as he was always called, was a bold young man, and he asked what sum was required for the paper. When he heard that £25,000 would

secure it he promptly bought an option to purchase within a fortnight. He then set about trying to get the newspaper proprietors whom he knew to take up his option—for he had no money. No one would touch the *Evening News* with the proverbial barge-pole.

It happened that the office of the *Sun* was in Tudor Street and that Harmsworth had taken an office in that same famous thoroughfare, exactly opposite the *Sun* office. "K.J.," feeling disconsolate at his failure to interest anybody in his venture, happened to look out of the window. He saw Harmsworth, immaculate as ever, emerging from the door opposite.

The fortnight of grace was nearly up. There was not a moment to be lost. "K.J." decided there and then to find out whether the owner of *Answers* and *Comic Cuts* and *Forget-me-not* would dare to take the plunge into the great and dangerous sea of journalism.

A few days later Harmsworth and his brother paid £25,000 for the paper on which Mr. Chamberlain's new friends had lavished £300,000.

"I remember," wrote Northcliffe long afterwards, when telling the story of the *Daily Mail*, "that after a hard day's work in editing, managing and writing for periodicals, my brother and I met Mr. Jones night after night in the ramshackle building in Whitefriars Street in the endeavour to find out what was wrong with the *Evening News* and why it was that a newspaper, in which the Conservative party had embarked between three and four hundred thousand pounds, was such a failure that the wags of the Radical Press used to amuse themselves by having its shares put up for sale in

bushel baskets and informing the world that such shares realized a few pence each.

“ Our combined efforts soon discovered the faults in the *Evening News*. They were, mainly, lack of continuity of policy (there had, I think, been eight editors) and lack of managerial control.”

The announcement that Harmsworth had actually bought the “ white elephant ” thrilled Fleet Street. Now, indeed, the world of journalism would see of what stuff this “ brilliant boy ” was made. Most of the observers were frankly pessimistic. It is one thing, they said, to edit magazines ; it is quite another thing to edit newspapers. A newspaper, and especially a daily newspaper, is a living organism demanding very special food for its sustenance.

Harmsworth listened to these criticisms. He had not, as most of his colleagues supposed, made a leap in the dark. He had not acted on impulse nor gambled with fortune. Everything, in that far-seeing mind, was already arranged and prepared : everything was made simple.

Those who buy the *Evening News* to-day in the streets of London may see the end result of the process which began thirty-three years ago. What they cannot see is the *Evening News* before that process began—the *Evening News* which lost £300,000 in next to no time. Harmsworth had one great central idea : he was *producing a newspaper*.

“ It is the business of a newspaper,” he used to say, “ to publish news.”

The *Evening News* began to justify its name. But it did better than that. It presented news in such a way that its

readers could see at a glance what was happening in the world. The typesetter and the page-maker had begun to play their part in the newspaper world. The *Henley House Magazine* had arrived in Fleet Street.

One of Northcliffe's intimate friends of those days told me that he tried, every afternoon, to seize upon a "talking-point" and give it prominence. What was it, in the day's news, he would ask, which men and women were likely to discuss as they returned from business?

The "talking-point" idea cut clean through the ancient traditions. For, while to-day the "talking-point" might be a speech by Lord Rosebery, the new Liberal Prime Minister, to-morrow it would be the Derby or Ascot, or a divorce case, or a murder trial, or a fresh attempt to reach the North Pole, or the discovery of a cure for some disease or a Royal procession or a rumour of war. The old journalism had had its traditions—and editors and politicians dictated them. It was the public which dictated the "talking-points." The real editor of the *Evening News* was not Alfred Harmsworth but the people of London.

There, I think, is the fundamental difference between the newspapers of yesterday and the newspapers of to-day. And there, too, I think, is Harmsworth's secret. His enemies, when his success became assured, accused him of "playing down" to the public; as usual they misunderstood. Harmsworth never "played down" to the public. His attitude was that the public had a right to be interested in anything in which it chose to be interested. He did not dispute that interest; on the contrary he tried to discover it.

The discovery was well worth making—as well worth

making as is the discovery by a parent or a schoolmaster of the real interests of boys and girls. For interests and enthusiasms are the only keys to the doors of character. He who would lead and influence men must know, in the first place, the things towards which their thoughts are turned.

Northcliffe, or so I have been told, for I never heard him discuss this subject myself, always disclaimed the honour of having invented a "new journalism."

"Journalism," he said, "is like the art of war. It rests on fundamental principles which are changeless. All that I have done is to apply these fundamental principles in a period when they were being neglected."

The "talking-point," on this showing, was one of the fundamental principles. It was the general enthusiasm of the day; the subject in which the mass of readers was most keenly interested. It was therefore, for the day, the best of all possible vehicles of ideas; but for the day only. On the morrow some new "talking-point" would take its place as the vehicle of ideas.

Here, apparently, is utter confusion and discontinuity.

"Harmsworth's papers," sneered their critics, "shout themselves hoarse about a different subject every day of the year."

The inference, of course, was that no sincerity of purpose, no fixed conviction, could underlie such journals. In fact, however, the *Evening News*, from the day on which Harmsworth bought it, had a definite policy, the expression of convictions passionately held and tirelessly proclaimed. His



kaleidoscopic methods of presenting news gave young Harmsworth a hundred texts for a single sermon and he preached that sermon day after day without ceasing. Thus, though the public chose the daily enthusiasms, the journalist directed it and gave it practical application.

And therein lay the interest of this new *Evening News* which Londoners began to buy so eagerly. The very thoughts of the buyers seemed to have been anticipated. There were columns—swift, clearly set-out columns—about the actual subjects which one had just been talking about. Better than that, the columns seemed to establish a real, personal contact between subject and reader. Reading them, one felt oneself, instantly, “in the swim of things.”

This touch of intimacy was not less important than the “talking-point” itself. Harmsworth attached immense value to it and was never tired of insisting on it. He was determined that his readers should play a part in what they read; that they should, so to speak, become actors in the pageant of life which he presented to them. The great descriptive writers whom he gathered round him made pulses beat faster and caused men and women to “feel” the events they were describing.

And so the readers of the *Evening News* found themselves gaining a new kind of experience; and experience taught them. *They began to think.*

This, I am well aware, is precisely what the critics of the Harmsworth Press have always maintained that no reader of that Press ever did or was expected to do. According to the critics these readers were “spoon-fed” on “mere sensationalism,” their views were manufactured for them, and

they were hurried from one silly topic to another. Yet I am convinced that I state only the bare facts when I say that Harmsworth's methods did make his readers think. I know, for example, that as a schoolboy, some of the "rubbish" which I read in *Comic Cuts* made me think. It achieved this result by appealing to my interests, which were doubtless vulgar enough. Interest is the mother of reflection. The crowds of Londoners, hurrying home after their day's work, found themselves, for example, suddenly transported to Windsor Castle as the hosts of the young German Emperor and his wife, who paid many visits, at this time, to Queen Victoria. They tasted a little of the flavour of Royalty on a ceremonial occasion. They caught a glimpse of the greatness of England as well as of the power of Imperial Germany; but the abiding idea was that the Kaiser had come to visit his "Granny"—just as they themselves might have done.

There came thought of England and Germany, curiously mingled with thoughts of Kings and Emperors and "Grannies."

And so, when the grandson sent his famous telegram to President Kruger at the time of the Jameson Raid and was reproved by Queen Victoria for his rudeness, masses of English folk—of the young democracy of England—felt that they knew all about that grandson and his methods, and something, at any rate, about the great, menacing nation over whom he ruled. And

"The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

The greatness of England, the miracle of her Empire, the high calling of her people and the right of that people to the

full and free enjoyment of their lives—to good wages, good homes, good food and healthy amusements, these were the heads of the sermon which Harmsworth preached every day from his new “talking-point” text to an ever-increasing circle of readers. There was no longer any “lack of continuity of policy” in the *Evening News*.

Nor did that newspaper want, any longer, an effective managerial control. Harmsworth never, for an instant, forgot that an evening paper is carried home to be read over the fireside. The *Evening News* was interesting to women as well as to men. Advertisers were invited to notice this fact. They responded with eagerness. The great shops and stores which supply woman’s needs began to compete for “space” and their announcements of sales and bargains became a feature of the paper—a feature of enormous interest to women readers. Thus the *Evening News*, that bundle of dry bones, was clothed in flesh and received, once more, the breath of life. London inspired it with her moods and manners; in its turn it inspired and enlightened London.

The paper earned a profit of £14,000 in its first year.

But Harmsworth cared nothing for money.

## CHAPTER XVII

### “ BIGGER AND BETTER ”

“ THE success of the *Evening News*, and the announcement of the project of the *Daily Mail*,” wrote Northcliffe, “ I may note, in no way shook the complacency of the great dailies. *The Times* went on in its mysterious way in the island of Printing House Square; the *Daily Telegraph* continued its gentle rivalry of the *Standard*, the *Morning Post* sat aloof; the *Daily News*, political and literary, was the leading Radical organ, and the *Daily Chronicle*, under Mr. Massingham, was the most brilliant and enterprising of all. Their lack of initiative, through which they had fallen from the highly competitive days of the 'sixties, and their subservience to party, were a distinct invitation. . . .”

Initiative in Harmsworth's view meant, first and foremost, the discovery of “ talking-points,” that is to say the discovery of public interests. The newspaper man must know his public and must keep before him the idea that subjects capable of awakening the enthusiasm of large numbers of his fellow-citizens are never subjects to be lightly passed over. Harmsworth, on the other hand, made a clear and fundamental distinction between popular interest and popular opinions. It was impossible, in his view, to influence the choice of interests and enthusiasms to any material extent; these are

part and parcel of the general mind just as they are part and parcel of the individual mind. Opinion, however, stood in a different case. Opinion can be formed or moulded ; it can also be challenged. On all matters of opinion a newspaper was laid under the obligation to follow the dictates of its " conscience " without reference to the wishes of its readers.

On the other hand the anticipation of interests and enthusiasms was, according to Harmsworth, as much the journalist's business as their discovery. The journalist, consequently, must at all times keep in touch with men and affairs ; he must travel, he must read ; he must employ every possible method of enlarging his mental horizon. Moreover, he must possess quick sympathies and a highly developed power of observation—in addition to his power of expression. The journalist, in short, must be " a live man."

" Party ties " can have small influence on a nature of this kind, for loyalty to a party implies a certain rigidity of mind. The public itself is never loyal to any party. It changes its allegiance continually and even its interest in politics is fitful. There are more days on which politics are not a " talking-point " than days on which political matters engross public attention. Harmsworth believed that this fitfulness of public interest was a good thing in so much that it preserved a kind of proportion and tended to keep every department of life " human."

His views, naturally enough, seemed grotesque or even positively mischievous to the older school of newspaper men, who regarded " the affairs of the nation " as the only legitimate concern of the Press. The proprietor of the *Evening News* was called a " will-o'-the-wisp," a " chameleon," a political

" Mr. Facing-both-ways," and many another name because his support could " never be counted on for two consecutive days." The public, however, saw and understood what was hidden from both politicians and newspaper men. Harmsworth, they realized, had his own policy and his own principles. And because Harmsworth had his own policy and principles and was true to them in season and out of season, in fair weather and in foul, they followed him, rejoicing, at the same time, in the immense efficiency of his journalistic craftsmanship.

In this year, 1894, Harmsworth's policy and principles were definitely in the ascendant. Lord Rosebery's uneasy Premiership was evidently doomed; the voice of the Man of Birmingham, and his gospel of imperialism, were enchanting the new England. Home Rule was a lost cause; the Empire and Social Reform monopolized enthusiasm.

In 1895 enthusiasm " boiled over." Rosebery lost a vote in the House of Commons—for having, as was alleged, failed to secure a sufficient supply of the explosive, cordite—and immediately resigned. Lord Salisbury succeeded him as Prime Minister, and called on Mr. Chamberlain, the one-time fiery Radical and Home Ruler, to become Colonial Secretary in a Conservative Government—or rather in a Unionist Government, for the Irish Question and the opposition to Home Rule had actually bestowed a new name on the Conservative party. The Man of Birmingham accepted the post and became a member of the British Cabinet. At long last the influence of the French Revolution had penetrated to the high places of English government.

Harmsworth had no difficulty, in these days, in discovering

his talking-points. "Joe" Chamberlain was the man of the hour in every sense of that abused term. Had he not saved "the Union" and defeated the schemes of the Fenians and the Pope? Was he not, at the same time, the champion of the common folk, the man who had suggested old-age pensions and who, already, in his native Birmingham, had wrought immense and most beneficent social reforms? "A greater and a better Britain" became the slogan of the Chamberlain men.

The *Evening News* gave its whole-hearted support to that policy of "Bigger and Better." Harmsworth's enthusiasm was kindled; he inspired all those who worked with him. Not only so, but he—the "fiery young Radical"—actually consented to stand himself as Unionist candidate for Portsmouth at the General Election which was then about to take place.

That decision to become a Parliamentary candidate reveals, I think, the extent of Harmsworth's enthusiasm for Chamberlain and for Chamberlain's policy. It casts, also, an interesting light on his enthusiasm for journalism as such. Had Harmsworth been elected a Member of Parliament he would—as he well knew—have been compelled to withdraw himself, to some extent at any rate, from Fleet Street. He might even have felt it necessary to give up the active control of his newly-acquired newspaper—for his conception of journalism was antagonistic to the idea of "party ties." He was, apparently, prepared to make this great sacrifice provided only that a more effective means of expounding his gospel was thereby afforded him.

As it happened, however, Portsmouth rejected him.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ONE HALFPENNY

THAT was Harmsworth's only Parliamentary candidature. He discovered, I imagine, during the fierce weeks at Portsmouth, that the political life was less well suited to his genius than the newspaper life. The discovery brought him back to London with a great new project surging in his mind. He had proved his capacity to conduct an evening newspaper ; why should he not follow up that success by conducting also a morning paper, a " great daily " ?

For years he had been a careful student of all the existing great dailies and he had acquired an immense amount of knowledge about them. He knew, for example, that *The Times*, which seemed to stand as firm as a rock, was really encountering difficulties, and he traced this change of circumstance, so evident to him, so unsuspected by Fleet Street, to the famous attack made by that great journal on Mr. Parnell under the heading of " Parnellism and Crime." *The Times* had published a number of letters alleged to have been written by Mr. Parnell, letters which seemed to establish Parnell's association with the influences in Ireland that had been responsible for the assassinations in Phoenix Park, Dublin. The tremendous sensation which was produced led



to the appointment of a special Commission of Inquiry. The letters were proved to be forgeries, and the forger, who had taken them to Printing House Square, Richard Pigott, fled the country and committed suicide.

Harmsworth took the trouble to compare *The Times* in these days of its misfortune with *The Times* of an earlier period and derived great enlightenment from the enterprise. At the height of its early glory *The Times*, as he discovered, had been a "fighting organ," fierce of language and vigorous of action. Its first proprietor and founder, John Walter the first, had actually gone to prison for his boldness in proclaiming the truth. Its second proprietor, John Walter the second, whom Northcliffe always rated much higher than Delane, had made it feared as well as respected. But in the days before the Parnell disaster *The Times* had lost something of its early vigour and alertness. It had not recovered these qualities :

"This journal," *The Times* itself confessed, in its obituary notice of Lord Northcliffe, "was, in 1908 (the year Northcliffe acquired a controlling interest in it), in some danger of not justifying its title ; it was not moving with the times. For more than a hundred years it had guided, formed and reflected the opinions and ideas of the governing classes in England . . . a new era, social, political and intellectual, was about to develop."

The same kind of weakness was undermining a great many other established organs which did not enjoy either the prestige or the extensive foreign news service of *The Times*.

“What did one find?” wrote Northcliffe long afterwards of these other dailies in the year 1895. “An immense police-court report occupying, on some occasions, a whole page; from Canada and the United States hardly anything came except by Reuter’s agency. Paris, on the other hand, was a very fount of journalistic wealth under these unenterprising people—for news from Paris was cheap and the French journals were readily to be got. Germany at that time did not interest this country at all. . . . Parliament was very fully reported, space being given to Toms, Dicks and Harrys whose views were of no importance, and that despite the fact that a Parliamentary Commission in the House of Commons had reported years before that the additional space demanded for newspaper men in the House of Commons was not needed because it had been ascertained that the public did not read the long reports. . . .

“The great world was becoming very interesting at that time. Parish-pump politics were slowly giving way to world affairs.”

There were “talking-points,” that is to say, in the ends of the earth. But the mass of the London Press ignored them. The imperialism of Mr. Chamberlain, the policy of “Bigger and Better,” possessed not a single authentic mouthpiece which made use of language which ordinary folk, who were the props of this policy, could understand.

Harmsworth perceived his opportunity—in the best sense of that word. If the message was to be delivered a new vehicle must be created for its delivery. He thrilled to think

that, at last, he would be able to speak, morning after morning, to the great body of the British public in words which the humblest could understand. The first decision which he took about the *Daily Mail* was that its price should be one half-penny.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE IMPERIAL IDEA

MR. CHAMBERLAIN, as Colonial Secretary, was now Master of the British Empire. He spent Christmas of 1895 at his home at Highbury, in Birmingham, among his orchids. Five days later a telegram from London informed him that Dr. Jameson, a high agent of the Chartered South African Company, had, with 500 or 600 troopers, galloped across the border separating British South Africa from the Boer Republic of the Transvaal.

Mr. Chamberlain realized in an instant the serious nature of the news. He was aware that the British and the Boers in South Africa were at loggerheads, and he knew that many of the foreign settlers in the Transvaal, for the most part comparatively humble folk of Scottish origin, greatly resented the fact that President Kruger and his colleagues refused to accord them any share in politics. He knew, too, that Cecil Rhodes, the Prime Minister of Cape Colony, had stationed Jameson in readiness to go, if necessary, to the help of the foreigners in Johannesburg. The Jameson Raid amounted, almost, to an act of war by Briton on Boer.

Chamberlain took the midnight train to London, and hurried to Downing Street. Arrived there, he sent off a peremptory telegram to Cecil Rhodes telling him to recall Jameson instantly. He remained at the Colonial Office the whole day, while London and the world buzzed with the astonishing news which began to pour in from South Africa.

Jameson had not obeyed his recall; he had continued his raid; but the Boers were warned and had taken action against him; he had been surrounded at Krugersdorp and had surrendered.

On New Year's Day, 1896, the story was complete. Chamberlain's enemies loudly proclaimed their belief that "Joe" had had a hand in the "dirty business," and denounced him and his new imperialism with the utmost violence. Among these enemies was the young German Emperor, William II, who sent off a telegram to Kruger congratulating him on the fact that "without appealing for the help of friendly powers," he had been able to triumph over the armed band which had invaded his country.

No one could mistake the significance of this telegram. It meant that, if Germany had been appealed to to help Kruger, Germany would have helped him—or it meant nothing. Instantly the public interest in Dr. Jameson and Rhodes and Kruger was diverted to the Kaiser. The young democracy of England—Chamberlain's democracy—which, in its secret heart, had applauded "Dr. Jim" for his dash and daring, was roused to fury. Did not the Kaiser call himself the friend of England? Did he not accept, almost every year, the hospitality of his grandmother, Queen Victoria, and of the English people?

Mr. Chamberlain made himself, at once, the mouthpiece of this indignation. He took an early opportunity to declare that Britain would resist, at all costs, the interference of any foreign power in the affairs of the Boer Republic. He saw to it, too, that the Government of which he was a member commissioned a "flying squadron" of the Navy. This

firmness, and perhaps also the telegram which he received from Queen Victoria, cooled the Kaiser's enthusiasm for Kruger. There were explanations and apologies and the incident closed.

Nevertheless, the incident deserves the careful attention of the student of those times, and especially of the student of Harmsworth's career. History was repeating itself. Once again the power of Prussia was reacting against the spirit of European democracy, that is to say, against the spirit of the French Revolution. What Frederick William of Prussia had felt against the imperialism of Napoleon and the French people, William II, his successor, was feeling now against the imperialism of Chamberlain and the English people. "Prussianism" and democracy glared at each other once again.

In the year 1896 few people realized this fact. The Kaiser's telegram was ascribed to his own impetuous nature, and there was much talk about "naughty boys" and "angry grandmothers." In truth, however, the Kaiser was acting in strictest accord with the traditions of his family and of his people, just as Chamberlain was acting in strictest accord with the traditions of popular democracy. The English democracy of the year 1896 was as intensely "national" as had been the French democracy of the year 1806. The hostility of Prussia in 1896 was exactly similar to the hostility of Prussia in 1806.

I do not think that Chamberlain realized this or perceived what it meant; nor do I think that Harmsworth, at that early date, was aware of the full extent of the danger. But there was in England in 1896 one man who read the incident correctly in the light of history. That man was Edward,

Prince of Wales, the uncle of Kaiser William, and the future architect of his country's salvation. Even before the Jameson Raid and the Kruger telegram, Edward VII had begun to lay the foundations of friendship between England and France, between the democracy of the Revolution and the democracy of the Man of Birmingham.

Harmsworth's imperialism, like Chamberlain's imperialism had no special foe at this time. "Hands off England" was the slogan of these two men, and the slogan applied to all hands, Prussian or French or Boer. The young democracy, in other words, was beginning to feel its manhood. It was growing strong; it had yet to acquire experience. Fighting was natural to it; diplomacy, in the larger meaning of that term, was not. Indeed, in his dealings with Kruger, after the Jameson Raid, Chamberlain introduced a "new diplomacy" to an astonished Europe. He published every secret, and took the public wholly into his confidence with what was described at the time as "superb arrogance." He also, in his speeches, adopted the very tones of Napoleon in his younger days when France had become, for the Corsican, "the great nation." In January 1896, at a dinner in London, he quoted Tennyson's verse :

" Britain's myriad voices call  
Sons, be welded each and all,  
Into the imperial whole,  
One with Britain, heart and soul !  
One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne."

" Let the Little Englanders," he cried, on another occasion, " say what they like; we are a great governing race, predestined by our defects as well as by our virtues to spread

over the habitable globe, to enter into relations with all the countries of the earth. Our trade, the employment of our people, our very existence depends upon it. We cannot occupy an insular position, and we cannot occupy ourselves entirely with parochial matters."

There was the same truth which had seized on the imagination of Napoleon when, nearly a century before, he demanded for France, "Ships, colonies and commerce." Democracy lives by trade; without trade it falls, inevitably, back into servitude, though that fall may carry it through the inferno of Revolution. The enemies of democracy always attack its merchandise, and attempt to destroy its markets. This, however, does not mean that the imperialism of democracy is mere "cupboard love"—the mistake so many shrewd folk have made. Napoleon believed in the spirit of the French Revolution exactly as men believe in their gods. Chamberlain and Harmsworth had the same faith in the English Revolution, that "movement" which began about the middle of the nineteenth century, and which is still actively in progress. They believed, that is to say, in Man as opposed to classes of men; in red blood as opposed to blue blood; in equality as opposed to the political liberty of the Whigs. This faith is the mother of nationalism because it is essentially a fighting creed. It engenders warfare at home, and so threatens stability and strength abroad. What occurred during the first stage of the French Revolution occurred also during the first stages of the English Revolution, when Chamberlain was boasting of his parochial-mindedness, and when Prussia was marching, unchallenged



by England, to Paris and to world power. But this boldness of its enemies soon rouses a democracy to activity. The fighting instinct turns outwards as well as inwards. The imperialist stage then begins.

"We believe," cried Chamberlain, "in the greatness of the Empire. We are not afraid of its expansion. We think that a nation, like an individual, is the better for having great responsibilities and great obligations."

He quoted the lines of Kipling—the poet of the new democratic imperialism—in which England speaks to her colonies and dependencies :

"Also, we will make promise. So long as the blood endures  
I shall know that your good is mine: ye shall feel that my strength  
is yours:

In the day of Armageddon, at the last great fight of all,  
That our House stand together and the pillars do not fall."

That speech was delivered in Glasgow on November 4, 1896; it was reported fully in Harmsworth's "great daily"—the *Daily Mail*—which was then only six months old.

"First and foremost," Harmsworth declared of his new venture, "the *Daily Mail* stands for the power, the supremacy and the greatness of the British Empire. . . . The *Daily Mail* is the embodiment and mouthpiece of the imperial idea. Those who launched this journal had one definite aim in view . . . to be the articulate voice of British progress and domination. We believe in England. We know that the advance of the Union Jack means protection for weaker races, justice for the oppressed, liberty for the down-trodden. Our Empire has not yet exhausted itself."

## CHAPTER XX

397,215

HARMSWORTH brought to the creation of the *Daily Mail* all his matchless knowledge of newspaper work, and all his boundless enthusiasm for "the imperial idea."

"We prepared for battle," he wrote long afterwards, "by plenty of staff work. For months before May (1896) we produced a great many complete private copies of the paper. In some of these, I remember, were inserted all sorts of grotesque features with which to delude any of the enemy who might be awake and we saw to it that he got those copies. . . .

"While the project of a complete morning newspaper at a halfpenny aroused comparatively little interest among those most directly concerned (the proprietors of the penny morning newspapers and the owners of *The Times*, which had maintained its price of 3*d.* since 1861) events proved that the public was vastly interested in the new development, and far more so than we anticipated. We had prepared for an issue of 100,000 copies. The paper chosen was, as now, exactly that used by penny morning newspapers. We were equipped with the very latest *cri* in mechanical appliances. Able young men from everywhere,

having watched the progress of the *Evening News*, were offering their services. We thought that we had made every provision for every contingency, but the only lack of foresight shown, if I may say so with modesty, was in not anticipating the immense demand which resulted. The actual number of copies produced on the first day was 397,215, and it became instantly necessary to commandeer various neighbouring printing establishments while more machinery was being made for us."

The first unpublished copy of the *Daily Mail* was produced on February 15, 1896. It contained a full telegraphic and news service and articles—all of which were very expensive. Twenty-four hours before the publication of the first published copy—that of May 4, 1896—the staff gathered together. They remained gathered together until 2 o'clock on the morning of publication, when the issue was printed and its health solemnly drunk.

Harmsworth did not leave the office in Carmelite Street for the first two days and nights. He then went home and slept for twenty-four hours, when his alarmed household wakened him.

The first issue contained important news about affairs in the Transvaal.

BOOK II

THE GROWING

*“As the German threats are directed in equal parts against France and against England, there is every reason why the two powers should put their heads together.”*

—THE DAILY MAIL, July 11, 1905.



## CHAPTER XXI

### MASTER IN ITS OWN HOUSE

THE *Daily Mail* completed the work which the *Evening News* and *Answers* and all the other publications had begun. It told the vast mass of Englishmen—circulation soon rose above half a million—what was going on in the world. Few people seem to understand even yet exactly what this means.

The basis of democracy is the idea that the mass of the people of a nation possesses sovereign power. Power belongs to the people and proceeds from the people. Power, in other words, is public opinion. Before education became universal, as I have said, public opinion was largely moulded by the clergy and by orators of various kinds (though its actual formation usually took place in bar parlours, workshops and meeting-houses). The majority of the people could not read and therefore had no means of checking the opinions advanced by reference to accounts of actual events. And even after reading became a general accomplishment, the same difficulty obtained. The “newspaper public” of the days before Harmsworth appeared on the scene was a small one.

Harmsworth, in literal truth, brought the Empire, the world, to the cottage door. *He gave to the humblest the raw material of opinion.* He made it possible for the agricultural

labourer and the dweller in mean streets to argue from actual facts and with knowledge. His news was honest; it was full; it embraced the whole earth. Moreover, the cleverest descriptive writers in the country made it easy to read and easy to understand and the cleverest page-makers and typesetters in the country caused it to "leap to the eye." Harmsworth became the master of the main source of the raw material of British public opinion.

On no single occasion in his life did he abuse that position. No matter what opinions his papers might express, the news itself, the account of the actual happenings, was fairly and accurately stated. There was no suppression of awkward truths, no hiding of important facts. Moreover, the reader was never deceived as to what was news and what was opinion. News and views were kept separate. Not only so, but views exactly opposite to the views of Harmsworth were printed almost every day so that readers might, every day, "hear the other side."

In all the torrents of abuse that poured on Northcliffe, during the stormy years, there was never a single suggestion that his journalism was other than absolutely clean. His worst enemies knew that, on the score of journalistic honesty, he was without reproach.

This fact, a fact of transcendent importance, gave the opinions expressed by his newspapers very great weight. The mass of the public realized that they were dealing with an honest man who had no concern other than the truth as he knew it. He might be mistaken; no doubt he was often mistaken; but at least there was the assurance that he had tried to arrive at a right opinion.

Here was the secret of an influence which, within a few years, began to make the most powerful forces in Britain uneasy, and which shook the established newspaper Press to its foundations. Harmsworth's policy of giving the news, fearlessly and faithfully, had the effect of making the public master in its own house, a position which the public had never before occupied. Every question was brought immediately to the bar of public opinion, and there was no respect of persons. The public learned often about matters which those chiefly concerned in them would have done a great deal to keep secret. The public became the judge, the sole judge, of men and manners and morals. The public, too, received such information as enabled it to arrive at the truth about subjects which, formerly, had been looked on as too "technical" for general discussion.

And, in addition, "the Harmsworth Press" became the greatest market-place in the land. Big circulations quickly attracted advertisers; in the columns of the *Daily Mail* millions of readers learned the values and prices of goods of all kinds and were thus enabled to exercise control over their local tradespeople. The *Daily Mail*, again and again, "made the market" for the country. The inevitable result was the supply by shopkeepers and manufacturers of better articles at lower prices.

Harmsworth had clearly foreseen the immense part which advertising was destined to play in newspaper development. He had foreseen, also, the danger to the public of a state of affairs in which newspapers should be wholly dependent on the revenue derived from advertising. He took effective measures to protect his own readers against this danger. No



advertiser ever, at any time, or in any way, direct or indirect, influenced the news columns of any one of Alfred Harmsworth's papers. "Puffs" of all sorts were sternly discountenanced; and no sacrifice of revenue was considered too high a price to pay for complete immunity from outside pressure. Much has been said against the *Daily Mail* in its stirring and eventful career, but never has it been said of it that its sources of information were tainted. That Harmsworth's journalism was clean in the commercial as well as in the moral sense his most bitter critics did not at any time attempt to deny.

It was not enough, however, in Harmsworth's opinion, merely to resist attempts by interested parties to "influence" news; active steps to combat such influence were necessary if the reading public was to be served worthily. The Man of the *Daily Mail* exerted himself continuously to secure a proportion of "small" advertisements to balance the large or "display" advertisements of the great firms. These "smalls," as he saw, preserved to a newspaper a measure of financial independence—since no "ring" of advertisers can affect them—and thus strengthen it against people anxious to make use of it for their own ends. "Sales certificates" afford another means of resistance to "pressure," the value and importance of which Harmsworth greatly esteemed. A paper which can state that its daily circulation exceeds a million copies has nothing to fear from any advertiser. It is offering value for every penny paid to it by business men.

On the other hand, the Man of the *Daily Mail* treated his advertisers with as scrupulous fairness as he showed to his readers. He took almost infinite care to secure that announce-

ments should be well printed and well “shown” and that those who had bought space from him should obtain the full benefit of their purchases. He told the whole world exactly how many copies of his papers were being sold and thus enabled everybody to form an estimate of the worth of the publicity which he commanded. The business community appreciated this frankness and rewarded it. The most independent newspapers of the day became also the newspapers carrying the largest number of advertisements. These advertisements, too, were invariably honest in their character—for the Harmsworth Press flatly refused to have anything to do with shady or even doubtful enterprises. Thus those millions of readers who trusted Harmsworth’s news trusted also the immense and varied market which he opened to them. Advertisers in the *Daily Mail* received something even more valuable to them than publicity; the mere fact that their wares had been admitted to the pages of that journal was a testimonial to the virtue of their wares.

## CHAPTER XXII

### GROWL AND SCOWL

A FEW months after the *Daily Mail* appeared, the trial took place in London of Dr. Jameson, and his Transvaal Raiders, and the British public learned something of the struggle going on in Africa between their fellow-countrymen and the Dutch Boers. Dr. Jameson was convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment—in order to pacify President Kruger. But, in its heart the British public bore him no ill-will. After all, his fault had been, merely, excess of patriotism.

That undoubtedly was Harmsworth's opinion. The great Cecil Rhodes, Jameson's close friend, was at this period rather "under the weather," so far at any rate as the Home Government was concerned; but the *Daily Mail* stood by him and began to explain to its readers that Rhodes was the champion of England against Kruger, the champion of the enemies of England, the man to whom the Kaiser had sent his insulting telegram, the man who refused to Englishmen in the Transvaal the most ordinary rights. These growls awoke many echoes, for the Young Democracy of Britain was as touchy as a schoolboy who has just been elevated to senior rank. The British public, at the name of Kruger, growled like the British lion and the name of the Kaiser, the sender of the telegram, produced another growl. There

were growls too for France, where Kruger had many sympathisers and also, in a lesser degree, for Russia and America.

The lion could afford to growl, for he had no allies and felt no need of any. His eyes ranged the serried ranks of his foes and saw only jealousy and dislike, if not actual hate. His eyes were unafraid; let them try their worst against him.

That mood of "growls and scowls" lasted through the amazing years from 1896 to 1899. Mr. Chamberlain, in these years, defied all Europe and found, in his attitude of defiance, a supporter in the *Daily Mail*. In 1898 the Man of Birmingham warned France in very plain language to mind her manners in West Africa and very shortly afterwards, when Russia took possession of Port Arthur, he remarked that he thought it was a very wise proverb: "Who sups with the devil must have a long spoon."

Lord Oxford and Asquith, then a younger hope of Liberalism, expressed horror at the "growls and scowls" policy of Mr. Chamberlain and called the "long spoon" sneer at Russia a "picturesque metaphor drawn from the dialect of the new diplomacy." He added that the Government of which Chamberlain was so distinguished an ornament was "touting for an ally in the highways and byways of Europe."

That last statement was not a sound criticism. The British public, as I have said, had no desire for allies because it feared no foes; its mood was exactly reflected in Mr. Chamberlain's defiant speeches, and in Harmsworth's not less defiant leading articles—for example the famous article in the *Daily Mail* at the time of the Fashoda crisis between France

and ourselves when the threat to roll our future ally in mud and blood was uttered.

During the Fashoda crisis, when the French flag was hoisted in the basin of the upper Nile, England and France reached the very brink of war. No Englishman was afraid. Mr. Chamberlain was in America at the time, but even he could approve heartily the vigour with which Lord Salisbury, his chief, defied France. France gave way and the British lion ceased for the moment to show his teeth. There was even talk, in which Harmsworth and Chamberlain had their share, of a closer understanding with Germany. In 1899 the Man of Birmingham had an interview with the Kaiser at Windsor and shortly afterwards recommended an alliance between Britain, America and the Teutonic race.

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee occurred during the period of "growls and scowls," during, that is to say, the period when the New Democracy was in its adolescence. The great event of 1897 was hailed as marking the very zenith of British power. The lion stood alone against the world and the world dared not lift a finger against him. Turgid descriptions of the British Empire, "the Empire on which the sun never sets," flowed from a multitude of pens. English youth called to English youth about the "island breed" and the "bull-dog breed" and "the boys of the Old Brigade" and so on and so forth, and the growls against "Old Kruger" and his Boers grew louder and louder.

It is a curious spectacle, this England of the Diamond Jubilee, of Chamberlain and Rhodes and Kipling and the Young Democracy—this England of the *Daily Mail* and the young Harmsworth. But more curious perhaps than the

spectacle itself is the interpretation of the spectacle which those whom the Man of Birmingham called "Little Englanders" offered to their fellow-countrymen. These earnest Liberals felt that something had gone wrong with the world; they could not understand what it was that had gone wrong. And they declared that "progress" had ceased and that the British people were about to enter the period of their decline. The Diamond Jubilee might mark the zenith of British power; the nadir of that power was not far distant.

Harmsworth knew better than that, for Harmsworth had realized what the "Little Englanders" never realized, namely that England had only just become a democracy. The growls of the lion were not the growls of old age; they were the expression of youth, ready to fight with its own shadow, and confident always of victory. Youth will be served. A "scrap" of some sort, somewhere, was almost inevitable.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### “ FIGHT AND MAKE FRIENDS ”

ON the 26th of August, 1899, the Man of Birmingham and his wife strolled down to a field in the afternoon. During a break in the sports, Chamberlain delivered a speech in which he reverted to “ those picturesque phrases of the new diplomacy ” which had startled the adherents of the old school.

“ Mr. Kruger,” said Chamberlain to the political picnickers at Highbury, “ procrastinates in his reply. He dribbles out reforms like water from a squeezed sponge. . . . The issues of peace or of war are in the hands of President Kruger and his advisers. . . . Will he speak the necessary words? The sands are running low in the glass.”

The sands were indeed running low. Before the leaves fell Britain and Boer were at war. “ Mr. Kruger ” had made his famous appeal to “ the God of Battles,” and the Man of Birmingham, “ with all reverence and gravity,” had accepted it. What Harmsworth had foretold must happen had come to pass.

The student of Harmsworth’s life should, I think, dwell on the fact that the *Daily Mail* did foretell the Boer War, even at a time when Chamberlain himself was deprecating all idea

of war. Harmsworth knew his British public because he shared, in every fibre of his being, the ideas and the feelings of that public. The blood of youth, mental youth, national youth, democratic youth, as well as physical youth flowed in his veins. He had the fighting instinct as well as the instinct of the wanderer and the pioneer. If the Boers would not live on fair terms with Britons, then the Britons must “ square up to them.”

That attitude, as every student of young manhood knows, is not a hostile attitude in the bitter sense. There is no rancour in it. “ Let us fight and make friends ” is its whole philosophy. Harmsworth foresaw that Kruger would never meet British South Africans half-way ; he foresaw that, when Kruger’s stubborn attitude became known in England, the public would decide, instantly, to “ fight and make friends.” And the statesman, in his nature, foresaw, further, that in no other fashion could the South African trouble be brought to settlement. Until Britain and Boer were united in a single nation, South Africa must remain an object of intense and hostile interest to Britain’s enemies in Europe.

And so the *Daily Mail*, like the British public, stood solidly behind Mr. Chamberlain. In *The Mystery of the Daily Mail*, published in 1921, it was stated :

“ The *Daily Mail* played a special part in the Boer War. It had done much during its brief history to educate the British public about the real grievances of our nationals settled in the Transvaal and had taken its stand by Cecil Rhodes in his days of misfortune, for it recognized in him, despite mistakes, a great patriot and imperialist.”



An editorial office of the *Daily Mail* was opened in Cape Town and an army of special correspondents were scattered throughout South Africa. Harmsworth was determined that his public should have the news.

It is, again, to his credit that he had foreseen that the news was not likely to be such as the British public hoped for and expected. The public, now that the fight had begun, was in the mood of an undergraduate on Boat-Race night. London and every provincial town resounded with patriotism of the very crudest kind. War songs which, happily, are forgotten, were sung to wildly delighted audiences until patriotism overflowed into sheer inanity.

The *Daily Mail* poured a cold douche of common sense on the hectic rejoicing. It declared that an army of more than 100,000 men would be necessary to overcome the Boers. News of disaster and defeat soon came to chill the first enthusiasm and to confirm Harmsworth's prophecies.

"Our artillery was outranged; and our infantry found themselves up against the crack shots of the world; our Generals had to deal with opponents whose brains had been stimulated by the keen life of the hunter and the pioneer. The man from the city was confronted by the man whose life had been spent in the saddle. The Englishman unfortunately was the man from the city."

"Guns, more guns, better guns," cried the *Daily Mail* in 1900, after the disasters of the opening days of the war. On January 9, 1900 it was announced that the War Office had decided to send twelve new batteries to South Africa :

“ They ought to have been sent weeks ago,” said the *Daily Mail*. “ This inexcusable delay will have to be paid for in men’s lives.”

British statesmen were not accustomed to language of this kind—which exactly expressed public feeling—and there was, immediately, a coldness between Harmsworth and the authorities. The Harmsworth Press, it was declared, was unpatriotic and was actually helping the Boers by its exposures. Harmsworth answered his critics, official and unofficial, by that inexorable weapon of NEWS, which he knew so well how to employ. His corps of war correspondents at the front continued to tell the dismal tale of defeat to millions of exasperated Britons. Public opinion, provided with its necessary raw material of truth and fact, began to exert on the Government that pressure which no Government on earth can for long resist. The unsuccessful Generals were “ Stellenbosched ”—that is sent into retirement—and Kitchener and Roberts—Kitchener of Khartoum, whose fame at Omdurman the *Daily Mail* had proclaimed abroad through the wonderful descriptive writing of G. W. Stevens, were sent out in their stead.

When the war began the circulation of the *Daily Mail* was 700,000. It rose, in the days of crisis, to well over 1,000,000—a figure undreamed of in journalism at that time. The New Democracy stood behind Harmsworth; those who could not, because of the distance of their homes from London, obtain his papers easily began, actually, to clamour for them. A *Daily Mail* War Express left London every night for the North carrying early editions of the paper and then, when this

expedient failed to satisfy the demand, a *Daily Mail* office, equipped with printing machinery of the latest type, was opened in Manchester. The same newspaper was printed at the same time in London and Manchester, and almost every breakfast-table in Britain and Ireland was brought within the sphere of Harmsworth's influence. In Exeter and in Aberdeen at the same hour, men and women read the War News which the active correspondents of the *Daily Mail* at the front had gathered the day before. The *Daily Mail* had ceased to be a "London daily," it had become the only paper circulating throughout the length and breadth of the land, a "British daily," the rival of every morning newspaper in the country.

It had achieved this extraordinary position solely because people trusted its news and desired to read its views. It was the public that made the success of this paper—a fact which Harmsworth's enemies were apt—to their cost—to forget. Had the public ceased to place confidence in Harmsworth the *Daily Mail* would have withered and died in a few months.

I wish to emphasise this obvious truth because an impression existed, and still exists, that in some mysterious way Harmsworth forced his opinions down the throats of a reluctant nation. The fact, of course, is that again and again Harmsworth forced the opinion of the nation down the throats of reluctant statesmen and politicians. The *Daily Mail* brought the polling booths into the very Palace of Westminster so that members of Parliament were kept, every day, face to face with their constituents. Those who were conducting the Boer War found themselves called, morning after morning, to account. Such is the power of NEWS in the hands of a great journalist.

Harmsworth was fortunate in the man whom he had appointed Editor of his newspaper. This is how he himself described Mr. Marlowe :

“ His (Marlowe’s) grasp of world affairs, his presentation of opinion, his happy sense of variety, you may witness every morning when you open your paper. Widely read, widely travelled, Mr. Marlowe has that mixture of English and Irish in him that gives both force and vivacity. You see his work in the paper, but you do not see that part of him which is not in the paper. His instinct for the quality of news which comes before him daily is almost unfailing.

“ There was a morning during the Boer War when a report came to London of a great success of the British in South Africa. The *Daily Mail* printed it and was about to send it off to the newsagents when Mr. Marlowe put on his thinking-cap and decided that the news was not true. Every other London editor, that day, was faced with the same difficulty as that which confronted Mr. Marlowe. The papers containing the false intelligence had been sent to press, but the fact did not weigh with this discerning intellect. Mr. Marlowe at once telephoned to the printing-rooms that no copy at all of the *Daily Mail* with that false telegram in it was to leave the office. He immediately began a new paper with the prominent contradiction of the false news which he guessed would be in every other journal. The papers destroyed were worth a considerable sum in money and the delay in the publication of the paper was irritating to newsagents throughout the whole country. But, as a result, public confidence in news in the *Daily*

*Mail* was intensified, and many letters of appreciation were received."

Mafeking night came with its series of wild and unlovely rejoicings and then, gradually, the war drew to an end. The *Daily Mail* was the first newspaper to announce the approaching end of the war. It was the only newspaper to give day by day an accurate account of the peace negotiations. It did this in the teeth of official opposition to any publicity of any sort—an achievement which delighted the country. The news, in this case, was transmitted by signals from within the "peace camp" to a watcher without the camp; it was sent to London in the form of commercial cables about the state of the diamond market, which cables, of course, were built up on a code. Everything had been arranged months ahead of time by people who had foreseen what was likely to happen.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### WANDERLUST

THE end of the South African War marks the end of the adolescence of the New Democracy of England; the end of the period of "growls and scowls." No sooner was peace signed at Pretoria than the impulse to "make friends" began to manifest itself everywhere. Mr. Chamberlain felt the impulse and set forth to visit the war area; Harmsworth, in the *Daily Mail*, urged his readers to give full effect to their generous sentiments.

There was nothing shamefaced about this attitude. The public was not sorry that it had fought, and it was proud—as it had reason to be proud—that it had won. But the splendid resistance of the Boers had captured its imagination and made it exceedingly anxious to win the respect of these most noble enemies. The spirit of Mafeking night was quenched for ever.

The reaction from that spirit brought men's minds back to domestic affairs. The Empire, suddenly, grew less interesting than the parish. Social reform at home became the dominant concern of the bulk of the population. The young lion turned from glaring abroad to glance round his own den.

Harmsworth was quick to realize that the "talking-points" of his readers had changed. He, too, was conscious, as he had been conscious from boyhood, of the need of im-

provement in home affairs. No man ever hated slums more than he hated them; no man ever recoiled from cruelty or oppression more swiftly than he recoiled. All the vast resources of his newspapers were dedicated in that year, 1902, to the service of a "Brighter England."

The time was favourable. With the death of Queen Victoria, the year before, an epoch had closed. Change and reform were in the air. The smug attitude of the "upper classes"—that attitude of implicit faith in an all-wise Providence which had decreed the riches of the rich and the poverty of the poor—was already shaken. Even middle-aged people began to doubt whether, after all, everything really was for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Younger minds thrilled with joy at a hundred manifestations of disruption and the breakdown of authority.

One of these manifestations was the coming of women to a new freedom. Another was the growth of Trades Unionism. Yet another was the decline of what Northcliffe, during his tour round the world, called "the squire and parson business." Everywhere authority found itself questioned. Everywhere old forms were pronounced unsuitable as vessels for the new wine of life. Artists broke away, suddenly, from the conventions of their art and began to paint wild imaginings; writers defied the whole body of orthodox criticism and wrote as their moods dictated; even popular music was transmuted, over-night, into ragtime. The world seemed to be striking its tents; yet it knew not, apparently, where it desired to go.

Harmsworth set himself to guess the direction of this immense *wanderlust*.

## CHAPTER XXV

“ GENTLE IS AS GENTLE DOES ”

AT this hour no man knows exactly in what direction the New Democracy of Great Britain and her sister nations is tending. It is not, therefore, a matter of surprise that, in the year 1902, Harmsworth failed to read the great riddle. The surprising thing is that he advanced so far as he certainly did advance in knowledge of the new “ mass mind.”

The Man of the *Daily Mail* had fewer illusions than most of his contemporaries. He knew that something big, something very big, was afoot. He knew, too, that this something was not to be measured by any of the commonplace standards. The English folk might be demanding higher wages and better conditions of life ; but such demands were merely expressions of the unrest which troubled their spirits. That unrest belonged to the passions rather than to the reason ; it proclaimed the working of an impulse of the same kind as the impulse which a century before had brought about the great Revolution in France.

Harmsworth himself, as I have said, was aware of the quickening of this impulse in his own spirit. It was this impulse undoubtedly which had thrilled him on the footplate of the railway engine ; it was this impulse which had set his



heart aglow with enthusiasm for the open road and the new machines which were bringing the open road back again to its ancient glory ; it was this impulse which had filled his imagination with the wonder of the British Empire and made him throw the whole weight of his influence into the scales during the South African War. And the same impulse, now, urged him to exalt the greatness of humanity and to assail all those interests and influences which held men in any sort of bondage or contempt.

The *Daily Mail* from 1902 onwards became the enemy of authority in the abstract ; it became the friend of what is called " the scientific spirit," the spirit of inquiry and observation. In other words it laid stress on the worth of human endeavour and human patience and on the comparative worthlessness of privilege in any of its forms.

" The rank is but the guinea stamp,  
A man's a man for a' that,"

very fairly describes its attitude. Man, in Harmsworth's eyes, was the unending miracle, a being essentially good, essentially wise and essentially progressive. Harmsworth recoiled from everything which tended in any way to debase that miracle, and even the smallest slurs on " Man's estate " distressed him. He wrote, while in Pekin, in the year before his death :

" My friend remembered that he had to play polo at a quarter to twelve, which meant that I was obliged to forgo my decision not to drive in a rickshaw and be pulled by a human being. . . . I shall never forget the swarms

of rickshaws in Pekin. . . . Personally I hate the things."

"Java. There are none of the hateful man-pulled rickshaws but, instead, funny little pony carriages."

An apostle of the dignity of manhood soon finds himself at loggerheads with all those who believe that man is vile. Harmsworth, and his song of the thrill and joy of life, were, from the beginning, anathema to the "squire and parson business" in all its various forms.

"The *Daily Mail*," these folk sneered, "is a newspaper written by office-boys for office-boys."

The Man of the *Daily Mail* was undisturbed by such criticisms. He went on with his work of preaching the gospel of the new world of "Red Blood and High Endeavour." He ransacked the globe for inspiring stories of human achievement. He bade his eager readers visit with him the workshops of the universe and see how greatly and how grandly men were toiling and planning for the common good. The wonders of modern science, the triumphs of modern medicine, the war against ignorance and superstition, the war against disease, adventures among polar ice, adventures in blazing deserts, adventures in the deeps of the sea, the high courage of London firemen, the mystery of Scotland Yard, the romance of trade—all these were the texts of this indefatigable evangelist of democracy. Harmsworth was not content to say that Man was noble and brave and patient; he proved it by a ceaseless procession of examples. The word "gentleman" in his mouth lost all its class significance and became a sort of benediction.

"All you Britons," declared the Man of the *Daily Mail*, "are gentlemen."

The "office-boys" liked the idea: the world beheld the interesting spectacle of the new British democracy drawing velvet gloves over its horny hands, in a moral as well as in a material sense. There was an immense improvement in manners, mingled no doubt with a certain amount of snobbery; there was, generally speaking, an immense improvement in behaviour. Coarseness and cruelty gave place, all over the country, to a chivalry which was not less attractive because it was apt to be a trifle shy.

This transformation was far and away the most notable social event of the early years of the present century and yet, curiously enough, it has attracted very little attention. I have not the slightest doubt that the Man of the *Daily Mail* was its chief author. For, with all his heart and soul, Harmsworth believed that his fellow-countrymen—all his fellow-countrymen—were gentlefolk; he spoke to them as such, appealed to them as such, and dealt with them as such. The adolescent mood of growls and scowls gave place, under this treatment, to a mood in which any act of unselfish heroism thrilled the whole country and in which the humblest in the land glowed with the knowledge of his blood and his "birth."

It was this "gentlemen all" attitude, undoubtedly, which made Harmsworth so zealous a friend of Trade Unionism and so strong a supporter of every movement which tended to increase the self-respect and the self-sufficiency of wage earners. The National Union of Journalists received from him strong and consistent support and on one occasion, in the course

of a letter apologising for his absence from the annual dinner of the Union, he wrote :

"It is not, in my opinion, wise or politic for newspaper proprietors and journalists to belong to the same institution and I have been much pleased to notice that there is nothing of the cap-in-hand and beanfeast business about your society. . . . It seems to me that a self-respecting society like yours has the opportunity of doing much for your members. Will you permit me to add that I am the more gratified at receiving your invitation because I know your properly independent attitude towards those who own newspapers.

"In the last twenty years our craft has risen from a humble, haphazard and badly paid occupation to a regular profession which must, in the future, offer increasing opportunities to men and women of ability. . . . It is my proudest boast that the changes and competition which I have introduced into English journalism have had the effect of increasing the remuneration of almost every class of newspaper writer as well as adding greatly to the number of those engaged in journalism. . . . The introduction of all manner of time-saving machinery within the last few years has made the work less arduous but more nerve-exhausting, and it is incumbent that journalists should unite for the obtaining of longer annual holidays and better pay."

Harmsworth was something more than a very good employer. He was an employer who respected and honoured the men working with him. In a few years he raised the standard of payment in every department of newspaper production almost out of recognition. He did much more

than that. He raised the status of journalists to that of professional men. Moreover, hundreds of men who fell into ill-health or misfortune experienced his gracious kindness—it amounted to lavishness—and the widows and orphans of those who died in his service were invariably richly provided for. “Gentle is as gentle does.”

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE SECRET FOE

HARMSWORTH knew very well that the "gentlemen" of England were the objects of the cordial dislike of the German Government. England and Germany had been allies of a sort since Waterloo; side by side they had opposed the march of democracy as represented by the French Revolution and Napoleon. The England of Queen Victoria had stood aside, in complacent neutrality, while Prussia devoured Austria and Denmark and France and swept all the other German states into her capacious net.

But the England of Chamberlain and the Harmsworth Press was not so amenable to German influences—as the incident of the Kaiser's telegram to Kruger had shown. The Kaiser had continued to visit his venerable grandmother at Windsor each year; but he had not disguised his intention to make the German Empire a deadly rival—in trade at any rate—of the British Empire.

As early as 1896, in the first year of its existence, the *Daily Mail* sent a special correspondent to Germany to record his impressions. He likened the Kaiser to the Egoist of George Meredith's novel. In the following year G. W. Steevens visited Germany for the paper and wrote a series of sixteen articles which were entitled: "Under the Iron Heel."

"Germany," declared this very great journalist, seventeen years before the Great War, "will keep her hands free to deal with us. Let us make no mistake about it. It is natural to deplore the unfriendship of the two nations, but it is idle to ignore it. Hostility to England is the mission of young Germany. It is idle to ignore, but we need be neither furious nor panic-stricken. It is as much Germany's right to seek after the good things of the earth as it is ours. It is proper that we should be plain with ourselves, and admit that, for the time, Germany is our chiefest rival in all fields. We can be competitors without being enemies. Only, in the honest effort to avoid enmity we need not cease to compete. Be very sure, at least, that methodical, patient, unrelenting Germany will make no such mistake. So, for the next ten years, fix your eyes very hard on Germany."

Three years later Harmsworth himself uttered the warning:

"This is our hour of preparation, to-morrow may be the day of world conflict. . . . Germany will go slowly and surely; she is not in a hurry; her preparations are quietly and systematically made; it is no part of her object to cause general alarm which might be fatal to her designs."

These warnings were not spoken in a bitterly hostile spirit. But in the year 1903 Harmsworth's anxiety increased. He knew, in this year of great events, that Germany had decided on war.

"It is all-important," he wrote, "for the Cabinet to

recognize that Germany cannot be counted as a friend but as a secret and insidious enemy. The nation will do well to insist that certain precautions, which should have been taken long ago, should now be adopted without further delay. A naval base on the East Coast and a standing squadron in the North Sea have become essential to British interests. It should not be forgotten that Germany openly aspires to command and to control these, our home waters."

This was unequivocal and it was spoken with authority. I have often wondered how high the authority behind the words actually was and I am inclined, for reasons of my own, to place it very high indeed. British statesmen as a class were sceptical in 1903 about "the German menace," but there was one Briton whose actions revealed the fact that he regarded that menace seriously. He occupied the throne. In the year 1903 King Edward VII received an official visitor, M. Loubet, the President of the French Republic, and laid the foundations of that *Entente Cordiale* with France which was destined to become, eleven years later, the means of the salvation of democracy.

King Edward VII, in the short period of his reign, had already begun to change the nature of his kingship. Already he had emphasised the fact that he was King of the British people rather than King of Great Britain. Already there were signs that he meant to break with the traditions of his House, of his Throne, and even of his Foreign Office. He loved France—Republican France; towards Germany—Prussianized Germany and her ruler, he was, clearly, by no means cordial in his feelings. His knowledge was greater than the



knowledge of his people, accustomed for a century to distrust France and to respect the Germans. The need to warn his people of their danger—the danger which he himself so clearly perceived—must have been constantly present to his thoughts. Harmsworth commanded the means of reaching the great mass of the British people.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS

THE Man of the *Daily Mail* was not, however, in 1903, solely occupied with foreign affairs. In that year he launched the second great venture of his career—a newspaper exclusively devoted to the interests of women.

“I can remember,” he said some years later, “being so unwise as to venture a considerable fortune in the endeavour to establish for women readers a newspaper mainly organized by women journalists. It was perhaps the worst of my many failures. There were many hidden reasons why it did not succeed. One of them was that ladies are not fond of taking orders from other ladies. Another was that their dispositions and ambitions frequently induce them to attempt tasks beyond their powers. . . . There is one great critical hour every night in every newspaper office in the world. It is the time when the day’s results of the work of brain and telegraph are gathered together in the form of long columns of type that have to be marshalled into the shape of pages. The task demands cool judgment and quick decision—it is a fight for accuracy against time. . . .

“Now one of my mistakes in connexion with that newspaper was to allow a lady to ‘make-up,’ as we call it in our Fleet Street argot. . . . The lady I selected was of a very

determined appearance and I was entirely misled by a neat black working costume that she wore, not at all a confection and very much an overall. . . . Here, I thought, is a charming and attractive woman, and at the same time an extremely practical one. But I learned something about the sex on that fateful evening. As the easier columns of news came to hand the pages all went well. When the rush began, from all sides came horrid printers, each with his column of type; this man with his Stock Exchange quotations, that with his Parliamentary sketch, another with the leading article, a fourth with the foreign telegrams. That prim but fascinating figure failed me.

“There came a demand from the publisher for newspapers that were not forthcoming. There were tears and other signs of feminine perturbation. And finally a dour Scottish foreman printer had to be brought on the scene to get some sort of paper away anyhow.”

This description was offered to the Society of Women Journalists at a dinner at which Northcliffe was the chief guest. The reference was to the *Daily Mirror*, a failure which reminds one irresistibly of the battle of Marengo—the battle Napoleon lost in the morning and won tremendously in the late afternoon. When it was obvious that the women of England did not desire a newspaper for themselves alone, a conference was called by Harmsworth. It took place in a small room and lasted a considerable time. The Man of the *Daily Mail* listened to the criticisms of his friends and fellow-workers and then announced his own intention to turn the *Daily Mirror* into a picture newspaper, the first of its kind,

selling at a halfpenny. Failure, in that hour, spread her wings and departed. Overwhelming triumph was achieved once again, by those methods of journalism on which each one of the earlier successes had been built up.

Harmsworth turned from his "Marengo" to deal with a new "talking-point" which for the moment engrossed the whole attention of the public, and which, as he saw, was destined to influence profoundly the development of the New Democracy, I mean Mr. Chamberlain's Tariff Reform campaign.

The Man of Birmingham had just returned from his visit to the South African battlefields. He had just given his allegiance to Mr. Balfour, who, on Lord Salisbury's death, had become Prime Minister. His overseas experiences had convinced him that Germany was capturing the trade of the world and, slowly but surely, was destroying British trade and industry. Tariff Reform, as Harmsworth realized, was Chamberlain's reply to that German trade activity of which doubtless he had seen so much and heard so much during his South African tour. The British people, said the Man of Birmingham, should aim at self-sufficiency; it should keep its markets to itself; it should make home industry profitable and force the foreigner to pay for his privileges.

Here, again, were the doctrines of the French Revolution and of Napoleon, doctrines which appeal at once and irresistibly to all those who have become "class-conscious"—that is to say, *who have identified themselves politically with some definite occupation*. The moment a man begins to think of himself politically as, say, a potter, he begins to resent the activities of foreign potters in his or his employers' markets.

The French Revolutionaries—after the Terror—were chiefly men of the market-place, professional men and men of the plough. They thought and acted as producers rather than as consumers. Chamberlain, as the leader of the new Democracy, and a manufacturer, had the producer's spirit very highly developed. He was as intensely class-conscious as any aristocrat and it wanted merely the sight or sound of that severe foreign competition which Germany was affording to convert him from the traditional Free Trade policy of British Liberalism to a policy of Protection. Chamberlain abandoned Free Trade the moment he discovered that Protection was not necessarily a "landlord's policy"—as he had certainly believed in his youth.

Harmsworth was much less class-conscious than Chamberlain. He possessed, moreover, a sense of the "public in mass" which Chamberlain lacked. The public in mass, the herd, displays always the consumer's attitude, never the attitude of the producer. In the herd there are neither bond nor free, neither potters nor doctors nor lawyers nor labourers, but only buyers, eaters—citizens. The herd instinct, mass-consciousness, is the negation of class-consciousness.

The Man of the *Daily Mail* was in full sympathy with Chamberlain's desire to increase the volume of British Trade and to foster good relations with the colonies, but he saw at once that Tariff Reform must, in Britain, mean taxes on food and that such taxes must bear harshly on the wage-earners. Britain, as a great food-importing country, stood in a special position. The *Daily Mail* declared, bluntly, that it could not support food taxes in any shape or form.

This was a definite breach with Chamberlain. Harms-

worth, whose anxiety about the German menace increased every day, saw with consternation that the Conservative party was about to be broken in pieces—since it contained a large body of Free Traders as well as a large body of Tariff Reformers—at the very time when its policy of a strong Navy and Army was in his opinion most urgently needed. He did what he could, short of agreeing to Food Taxes, to heal the breach. From this moment dates his support of Lord (Mr.) Balfour, the man whose unenviable task it was to attempt to keep the Free Trade and Tariff Reform members of the Conservative party together.

Lord Balfour's attitude of "philosophic doubt" towards Tariff Reform soon became the object of almost universal sarcasm.

"I'm not for Free Trade  
And I'm not for Protection;  
I approve of them both,  
And to both have objection"

wrote Sir Wilfrid Lawson beneath a cartoon by the late "F. C. G." in which Balfour, the Prime Minister, was depicted riding on a horse that bore the face of the Man of Birmingham. Balfour had his reins around the horse's tail and was riding backwards. Another cartoon showed Chamberlain as a tiger which had evidently just feasted. Under it was written :

"A lady named Fanny (Balfour's nickname) of Riga  
Once smiled as she rode on a Tiger,  
They came back from the ride  
With the lady inside  
And the smile on the face of the Tiger."

Lord Balfour bore it all with exemplary patience ; for he

had his duty to his country and his party to perform. And Harmsworth, who clearly understood the importance of that duty, espoused the unpopular cause and supported the unpopular man. He attacked Chamberlain without attacking either imperial preference or the Conservative party; a policy which earned him the hatred of the Tariff Reformers, who abused him with vigour.

There is no doubt that the attitude of the Harmsworth Press severely handicapped Mr. Chamberlain's early efforts. Mr. Chamberlain resigned from the Cabinet to become, in his own phrase, "a missionary of the Empire." The country was soon ringing with his class-conscious democratic imperialism.

"If," cried the Man of Birmingham, "our imperial trade declines, or if it does not increase in proportion to our population and to the loss of trade with foreign countries, then we sink at once into a fifth-rate nation. Our fate will be the fate of the empires and kingdoms of the past. . . . I tell you that it is not well to-day with British industry.

"I see signs of decay in British trade. I see cracks and crevices in the walls of the great structure, I know that the foundations on which it has been raised are not broad enough or deep enough to sustain it. Agriculture has been practically destroyed; sugar has gone; silk has gone; iron is threatened; cotton will go.

"Even suppose the tax upon corn increases the price of bread, does that necessarily increase the cost of living? Man does not live by bread alone."

That Chamberlain was passionately in earnest is certain.

That he failed to convince his countrymen reveals the fact that his countrymen were much less class-conscious—in the occupational sense—than he was. The New Democracy of Britain did not even at that early period choose to regard itself as butchers and bakers and candlestick makers, but as men and women—Britons. Harmsworth's appeal to "gentlefolk all" was a far truer reading of the national mind than Chamberlain's appeal to the market-place militant. Tariff Reform was launched too late in the day to succeed. It might, conceivably, have had a chance during the period of "growls and scowls" before the Boer War; after the Boer War, when the country was beginning to wonder whether that war might not have been avoided—as Mr. Lloyd George so insistently declared—and was most anxious to treat the Boers handsomely, it had but little chance. Both the Man of Birmingham and his imperialism were out of touch with the reality of the moment. Imperialism, indeed, as Chamberlain understood that word, was dead—as dead as was the Oriental imperialism of Disraeli. A new imperialism which, even to-day, remains difficult to define or to comprehend clearly, was already taking its place.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### "OUR ENGLAND IS A GARDEN"

WHEN the year 1904 began there were at least four prominent Britons who were firmly and finally convinced that Germany meant war. They were: The King, the Prime Minister (Lord Balfour), Lord Roberts and Alfred Harmsworth. For these four men nothing counted and nothing mattered when set against the supreme need of making Britain, Europe, the world perhaps, "safe for democracy."

I would urge my reader to dwell on this fact and bear it in mind. Harmsworth was accused of being by turns a Free Trader and a Tariff Reformer. These accusations were made by party politicians against a man who cared nothing whatever for any political party as such. Harmsworth regarded both political parties as instruments of the national will; he owed allegiance to neither. His concern was to convince his fellow-countrymen of their danger and *to help them to use any party and any politician to escape that danger*. He spoke not to Conservatives and Liberals but to Britons; the *Daily Mail* and all his other papers were but means to an end which he conceived to be the most important and the most urgent in the world.

"There can be no doubt," the *Daily Mail* declared in

July 1904, “ that Germany is arming herself with patience, calculating and laborious perseverance, for the day when she shall at last feel ready to throw down the gauntlet in the face of England. Germany is of those that look, meditate, and prepare before they leap, in order that they need have to leap only once.”

Harmsworth conceived that, to defeat the German menace, two things were necessary: the British people must be made aware of all the facts of the situation and must, at the same time, be assisted in every way to obtain those better conditions of life which are essential to health of body and health of mind. The *Daily Mail* set to work to achieve both objects. It inaugurated, in the years which followed, a series of competitions, each of which was designed to influence beneficially the lot of its readers. Amateur gardening, the most potent of all available means to physical fitness and mental content, was made a national recreation by the offer of prizes for sweet peas and roses and by innumerable articles and expositions. Hundreds of thousands of men and women “ took to gardening ” as the direct result of this policy. Their gardens enlarged and enriched their natures and improved their health. The love of outdoor life was encouraged and a counter-attraction created to the street-corner. The *Daily Mail* supported, at the same time, the “ Garden City ” movement, and laboured without ceasing to secure to every worker easy and cheap access to the seaside and the country. Harmsworth was one of Ebenezer Howard’s first supporters and gave £1,000 towards founding the Letchworth Garden City. The *Daily Mail* also

founded its well-known village at Welwyn. The *Daily Mail*, further, helped Englishmen to see and to know England in the fullest assurance that such a policy must strengthen the foundations of patriotism. It helped them also to build and furnish their homes so that these homes might be a source of pride and delight. The *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition is now an annual event of the London year and an important annual event at that; when it was started it was a part of the plan which Harmsworth had conceived for the awakening and forearming of his fellow-countrymen.

Not less a part of that plan was the smallholding which the *Daily Mail* purchased and on which it settled a townsman "in order to prove that, with a fair start, such a man could make farming pay even on this side of the Atlantic"—a demonstration which was successfully carried out. The campaign for Standard Bread, too, had as its deliberate object improvement in the health and strength of the people and did much to revive the baking of home-made bread throughout the country. The *Daily Mail's* egg-laying competitions encouraged large numbers of people to keep poultry.

Everyone of these competitions and enterprises was made the subject of ridicule by Harmsworth's enemies and rivals, who affected to think that sweet peas and roses and ideal homes were beneath the dignity of a newspaper or who saw in these things only a series of newspaper "stunts," devices to catch halfpennies and increase circulation. Personally I find nothing in the work of this great man which attracts me more than these competitions. They were so practical, so finely conceived and so efficiently carried out.

The sweet-pea competition brought the love of flowers to innumerable mean streets where the only "garden" available was a potful of earth on the windowsill. It added a new and rich interest to very many drab lives. It helped, as every invitation to achieve and to love beauty must help, to develop the chivalrous instincts of those who took part in it. Harmsworth, in originating that competition, proved himself once again the apostle of eager living and showed that his faith in the virtue of eager living was undiminished. He revealed, too, his practical sympathy with the mass of his fellow countrymen and his desire to help them to help themselves. It is the bare truth that his efforts did more to encourage the love of gardening, in all its branches, and to promote "the science of keeping fit" than those of any other man or body of men. The New Democracy, the gentlemen and gentlewomen of the New England, welcomed these efforts, responded to them, and took freely the benefits which they offered.

The gentlemen and gentlewomen of the New England listened also to the facts about the New Germany which Harmsworth, day after day, recounted to them. Politicians might sneer at "scaremongering" and talk easily about "our friends the Germans," the man in the street began to know better. Even the fury of the great Tariff Reform campaign could not wholly distract attention from the dreadful "war machine" which the overlords of Prussia were constructing and perfecting. King Edward's visit to the Kaiser at Kiel in the summer of 1904 was watched and discussed by the whole nation with an intensity of interest which revealed the true state of the public mind, nor was the

proposal of the *Daily Mail* in the same year, that compulsory military service should be instituted in this country so ill-received by the public as might have been expected.

That proposal deserves the attention of every student of Harmsworth's career. That it was wise and provident no one, with the experience of the Great War before his eyes, will question. That it was daring is sufficiently evident. The very idea of compulsory military service has always been abhorrent to Englishmen, and the Boer War had but newly ended. Harmsworth was well aware of the danger he incurred in giving his support to so unpopular a cause. He received personally, in a single week, after the proposal was published, more than 5,000 abusive and threatening letters and he soon learned that the entire business world was against him. Yet he held steadily to his course.

"Can a half-armed people survive," he challenged, "where the whole of the rest of the world is trained to arms? . . . All the omens point to the probability that Britain's position will be challenged in the near future. We may trust much to a watchful and conciliating diplomacy to secure our safety. But, after all, as Napoleon said, diplomacy without armed force behind it is like music without instruments."

In that year, 1904, a baronetcy was conferred on Harmsworth by King Edward on the recommendation of Lord Balfour. There are reasons for supposing that King Edward, more than any of his subjects, understood the extreme need of trained soldiers which his country was likely, soon, to experience.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### “THEIR HEADS TOGETHER”

THE year 1905 remains one of the most memorable in British history, for in that year the foundations of the *Entente Cordiale* with France were laid deep and strong by King Edward and his friends on the other side of the Channel. In 1905 the French fleet paid a visit to English waters and a body of Councillors of the City of Paris came to London and were received by the King. In that year also Harmsworth began in Paris the continental edition of the *Daily Mail* and received a peerage of the United Kingdom as Baron Northcliffe of the Isle of Thanet.

“As the German threats are directed in equal parts against France and against England,” the *Daily Mail* urged, “there is every reason why the two Powers menaced should put their heads together. Neither of them entertains any hostile purpose against Germany, for whatever may be written or said in either country, the idea of a deliberate war with Germany has never crossed the brain of any responsible Englishman. The German Press, however, has striven to convey to Frenchmen the impression that England is anxious to use France as a weapon against Germany, and to sacrifice France in the process. The suggestion is absurd, as what this country seeks is not a great and terrible war but a prolonged and honourable peace.”

The continental edition of the *Daily Mail*, from its first issue, was a staunch supporter of the *Entente* between France and England and so it has remained until the present hour. It told France clearly and fairly what England was thinking and showed her that the views of the King of England, whom she knew and trusted, were the views also of millions of his subjects. No more important service could possibly have been rendered to this country at that moment.

The enterprise itself, in its magnitude, was worthy of Northcliffe, for immense technical difficulties beset it. The news had to be sent to Paris, where the paper was printed, in time to be set up in type in the very early hours of the morning, and cable and telephone services in 1905 were still rather primitive. Some of the earlier news was actually despatched in stereotype, that is set up, ready to print, by the night train and boat. These stereotypes reached the French capital in the early hours of the morning.

The continental *Daily Mail* became the daily newspaper of all Englishmen and most Americans living or travelling in Europe. It reached the breakfast-tables of France and Belgium and the luncheon and dining-tables of Germany and Spain and Italy. Its contents were cabled, almost every day, to America and were quoted extensively in the foreign Press. Its influence became relatively very great, so that Northcliffe was able to tell the truth as he knew it not only to the whole of Great Britain and Ireland, but literally to the whole world on the same day. The citizen of Aberdeen found the Manchester edition of the *Daily Mail* awaiting him when he rose each morning; the citizen of Lyons might, if he chose, enjoy the same experience. The same news and the same views

were broadcast each morning over Scotland and Ireland and Wales and England and France. And each week they were despatched in the *Overseas Daily Mail* to the ends of the earth.

This tremendous engine of publicity was employed by Northcliffe, day in and day out, to expose the designs of Germany and to knit together, in a defensive understanding, the three great democracies of the world, the United States, France and Britain. For it was democracy itself, as Northcliffe believed, which was threatened—that doctrine of the sovereignty of the people which the French Revolution had given to the world. Prussia, he realized, stood for Feudalism, for the old ideas of blue blood and the divine rights of Kings, or aristocracy and privilege; the Old World was arming itself to strike down and destroy the New World just as, in the days of Napoleon, it had armed itself to destroy the French Revolution.

“ War is a horrible and dreadful thing for everybody,” Northcliffe cried to his multitude of readers, “ and the only way for England not to have war with Germany is for England to get ready. Civility is a beautiful idea, but when a man is getting ready to knife you, the best way to bring him to a brotherly frame of mind is to show him that you know what he is up to and that you are fully prepared for him. Never mind the English people who say there is no danger of Prussia precipitating Germany upon us. There is danger. And every Englishman who lives in Germany knows that there is danger.”

It was the truth; a truth which made the great Tariff Reform campaign look somewhat like Nero’s fiddling. But,



as yet, only a small number of people realized how serious the situation really was. Chamberlain went up and down the country preaching his doctrine of the ruin of British trade and the need of reviving it by means of taxes, and, by his eloquence, brought matters in the Conservative party to such a pass that Lord Balfour resigned his thankless task as Prime Minister and saw the supreme power pass to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the leader of the Liberal party. At the General Election of 1906 the Liberals obtained a tremendous vote of confidence from the country and Tariff Reform was utterly repudiated. Lord Balfour himself lost his seat in the House of Commons. The Man of Birmingham became the leader, in that House, of the rump of the party which his policy had so grievously reduced in numbers. In that capacity he witnessed the bestowal on the Boers of full British citizenship—an act of magnanimous wisdom which will reflect everlasting honour on Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and his Cabinet, and which was destined ten years later to contribute materially to the salvation of Britain.

Northcliffe took but small interest in the political game. His one concern was the attitude of the new Liberal Government towards Germany. Would the Liberals, the traditional upholders of democracy, take the measures necessary to meet the coming assault on everything which they held dear? He asked that question with monotonous regularity but obtained little or no satisfaction. The Liberals were concerned chiefly with social reform and seemed to regard the fighting services as an incubus.

“All the fine words in the world,” cried the *Daily Mail*,

“ cannot disguise the fact that the naval competition between England and Germany is intense and that Germany is now building a great fleet with the express object of meeting the British Navy at sea.”

This warning was spoken because a “ Little Navy ” party had been formed in Parliament and was busily at work trying to reduce the expenditure on battleships. Northcliffe turned every “ gun ” in his possession against this party. At the same time he gave his whole support to the scheme of a Territorial Army which Lord Haldane introduced. He endeavoured, too, to awaken the Colonies and Dependencies to a knowledge of the impending disaster.

His name had begun to carry weight throughout the Empire as a result of the wide circulation of the *Overseas Daily Mail* and of the fact that he and his brother, Lord Rothermere, had founded the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company—a vast paper-making industry which was destined to feed the greedy presses of London and Manchester and Glasgow and Paris. This company purchased an area of land as large as Yorkshire, it harnessed great waterfalls, it built towns in the wilderness, it established machinery and also the means of life and of recreation for its thousands of lumbermen and other employees.

“ A whole forest,” wrote the late Twells Brex, “ tumbles every day into the maw of these mighty mills. The great reaches of the noble river are full of floating logs.”

“ We notice with pleasure,” said a member of a group of working printers who visited Grand Falls, “ that every effort

has been made to secure the happiness and comfort of the employees. In the Club House we found billiard-tables, games, books and all the requisites of club life."

Londoners, meanwhile, began to see immense rolls of paper being carried through the streets and to read on each of the rolls, in scarlet letters, the words :

"Five miles of Newfoundland paper for the *Daily Mail*."

It was good paper. At the beginning of the year 1910, the Prime Minister of Newfoundland telegraphed to Northcliffe :

"Self and colleagues warmly congratulate you and your associates on the success of your Newfoundland manufactory of paper. The St. John's daily papers are all published with it to-day. The quality cannot be excelled. Everybody is delighted at this conclusive vindication of your enterprise and foresight."

## CHAPTER XXX

“MR. X.”

ON the morning of January 7, 1908, an announcement appeared in a prominent position in *The Times* to the effect that that newspaper was about to be formed into a limited liability company and that its business management would be reorganized by Mr. C. Arthur Pearson (later, Sir Arthur Pearson, who achieved so much for blinded soldiers), “the proposed managing director.”

The announcement caused a considerable stir because it was taken to mean that Mr. Pearson, the owner of the *Standard*, then one of the greatest rivals of *The Times*, was the probable purchaser of the great newspaper. Among others whose interest was keenly aroused was Northcliffe.

Northcliffe, as I have said, had had his eyes fixed on *The Times* for some years and believed that he could restore the vast influence which the second John Walter had created and which he had made one of the considerable factors in European life. The value of such a weapon, in the coming struggle with Germany, would, he realized, be incalculable. He determined to buy the paper in spite of the Pearson opposition and quickly got in touch with the late Mr. Moberly Bell, the Managing Director of *The Times*.

“Mr. Bell,” said Lord Northcliffe, “I am going to buy

*The Times*—with your help if you will give it to me ; in spite of you if you withhold your assistance.”

“ I will help you,” replied Moberly Bell.

The negotiations, which have recently been described by Mr. Harcourt Kitchin in his book, *Moberly Bell and his Times*, were protracted, for the sale was in the hands of the Court of Chancery, and a syndicate (which Mr. Kitchin calls “ The German Syndicate ”) was competing against Pearson and Northcliffe. The syndicate was not very well found in ready money nor was Mr. Pearson prepared to pay “ cash down.” Northcliffe, on the contrary, offered gold—through Moberly Bell. He actually paid £320,000 into the Bank of England in Moberly Bell’s name, for he was determined to keep his own name out of the negotiations. Mr. Kitchin recounts how much this mark of confidence in him pleased Moberly Bell and how later Northcliffe told him, Mr. Kitchin :

“ I wanted to please old Bell and to show that I, at any rate, believed in him. He made all sorts of conditions for *The Times* and for the staff, yet he made no conditions for himself. So I decided to make him the first Managing Director and to hand over the whole purchase-money to him. It was the least that I could do.”

Mr. Kitchin adds :

“ I, who know how deeply Lord Northcliffe’s action gratified my dear friend, lay this story as an imperishable wreath upon Lord Northcliffe’s grave.”

The offer which Moberly Bell made on behalf of Northcliffe was accepted by the Court of Chancery in preference to

any other and on March 23, 1908, *The Times* passed under Northcliffe's control.

“He told me himself,” says Mr. Kitchin, “most positively that he did not wish to interfere. ‘I shall leave the Editor unrestricted control,’ said he, ‘unless he should—which is quite incredible—fail to warn the British People of the coming German peril. I insist upon that duty being discharged.’ . . .”

Very few people knew, to begin with, that Northcliffe had become the chief proprietor of *The Times*. In *The Times* office itself the chief proprietor was called “Mr. X.” and this mysterious individual never appeared. He did, however, send “bulletins” to the Editor in which he expressed his opinions about the paper. These bulletins were familiar enough to the Editors of all the other papers under Northcliffe's control, but they occasioned astonishment in Printing House Square. Mr. Kitchin reflects this astonishment in the following passage which I quote at length because it undoubtedly expresses views held about Northcliffe by a considerable number of people :

“As I watched Lord Northcliffe trying to understand *The Times* and its staff and its readers, and failing to comprehend what its purpose was in the view of those who loved and served it, it was borne in upon me the truth that no man can conduct a newspaper who has not himself a mind akin to that of the class of people to whom it is designed to appeal. . . . The English ideas of education as expressed in its public schools and universities may be absurd and effete—

nevertheless they are definite and are inspired by a definite purpose. *The Times* had always been a newspaper conducted by educated people for educated people—according to English standards. And no one can understand men and women educated by English standards unless he himself has been subjected in his youth to the same educational influences. It does not alter a fact to condemn it as the outcome of a caste system; rather it emphasizes the fact, for nothing is so incomprehensible as a caste system to those who do not belong to it. *The Times* was a caste newspaper, and Lord Northcliffe did not belong to the caste. The most appropriate epithet which I can think of to apply to his mind is that which I have used already—it was unfurnished. He had never been educated in the English sense, he had never studied any branch of learning, even perfunctorily, he had never lived on equal terms of mutual criticism with those who had been educated on English lines. This may have been to his pecuniary advantage, but it was a fatal disability for one who sought to influence the conduct of so characteristic an English newspaper as *The Times*. Its ideals were, to him, utterly foreign.”

It would be difficult, I think, to discover a more complete misunderstanding of Northcliffe's character than is revealed by this estimate, and, incidentally, a more complete misunderstanding of *The Times*. *The Times* of the Walters was never a “caste newspaper”; it was essentially a national newspaper, the expression and vehicle of the national mind. John Walter the second possessed, in a peculiar degree, that “mass consciousness” which was also Northcliffe's conspicuous

attribute. He was able to comprehend and even to anticipate the “ general mind ” of the English people. His great newspaper presented the world’s news in such a manner that Englishmen, uncultured as well as cultured, were able to understand it. There is a picture on the wall of a room at Printing House Square which is eloquent of this truth : it shows a labourer with a copy of *The Times* in his hands and a look of intense concentration on his face. Northcliffe cherished for John Walter the second that lively admiration which is only felt by one genius for another of the same nature, and I have myself heard him express his belief that the great reputation of Delane belonged by right to Delane’s employer.

The truth, I think, is that those who were actively conducting *The Times* in 1908, and I include Mr. Moberly Bell among the number, were unsympathetic towards the new spirit which was agitating the national mind. Mr. Kitchen admits this to some extent, but lays the whole blame on the late Mr. Walter. In point of fact it was Mr. Walter and not Mr. Moberly Bell who took the first steps to introduce new blood and to reorganize the newspaper, and Mr. Walter, from the beginning, accorded to Northcliffe the full measure of his support. Northcliffe’s great achievement of bringing the price of *The Times* down to a penny was by no means made, as has often been stated, in the teeth of opposition by the Walter family. It was made with the full concurrence and the active help of that family ; indeed the project had been present to the mind of John Walter the third, who postponed it only because he realized its inherent difficulties.

Northcliffe placed immense store on what he called “ the Walter tradition ” and exerted himself to secure that the



great name which had stood, during more than a century, for the very best in British Journalism—in world journalism—should continue to be prominently identified with the direction of the newspaper. Mr. Walter, from the day of its creation, was Chairman of *The Times* Publishing Company, whereas Northcliffe himself, as I have said, was merely “Mr. X.” On the day on which Northcliffe died, Mr. John Walter, Mr. Walter’s son, was Chairman of *The Times* Publishing Company.

Nor did “Mr. X.” play the part at Printing House Square which malice has so often allotted to him. No man was more fully aware of the history of *The Times* than was Northcliffe; no man understood that history better or admired it more sincerely. His aim from the beginning was to restore, not to transmogrify, to recreate in the twentieth century John Walter the second’s *Times*, not to produce “a three-penny edition of the *Daily Mail*.” The principles which had guided John Walter the second guided also “Mr. X.”

Northcliffe, as I have said already, believed that these principles were inherent in journalism itself. John Walter the second, he declared, had been the greatest journalist of his age because, more than any of his competitors, he had recognized and followed the “rules of the craft” and applied them to the special needs of *The Times*. “Mr. X.” devoted his attention, in the first instance, to the supply of news, just as John Walter the second had done before him. He impressed on the staff of *The Times* the immense importance of news—(“events whether mental or material”)—and urged that by news alone could a journal live and have its being. The day’s news, the “talking-point,” he reiterated, was the very blood of the paper; and this “day’s news” could not be

obtained and recognized except by an infinitude of labour and organization. "It is news," said Mr. "X.," "and what you think of it which makes the spirit of a newspaper."

Northcliffe himself, as I have tried to show, lived by news. It was by means of news that he kept himself in touch with the mind of England. By the ceaseless study of news he developed his faculties of observation and anticipation. By news he carried to millions of minds, every day, the gospel to which his life was dedicated—let me call it "the gospel of the sovereignty of Man."

It was difficult, perhaps, for what Mr. Kitchin has called "educated men" to enter into the workings of such a mind. Academic education has the demerit that it is apt, while broadening the outlook, to narrow, in some instances, what may be called the human sympathies. It has the further demerit, in England at any rate, that it sometimes produces a form of intellectual snobbishness. There is little doubt that, in 1908, "the news side" of *The Times*, especially the Home news side, stood in need of strengthening and of development. Northcliffe's service to *The Times* consisted chiefly in his insistence on the value and meaning of news, and in his further insistence that "talking-points" are determined, in the last issue, by the public and not by editors or their assistants. It is not for editorial minds, he urged, to attempt to dictate popular enthusiasms in the matter of news; the editorial mind must rather tune itself, in this matter, to the public mind.

Such a doctrine struck some of those who heard it as immoral in the last degree. Northcliffe, these people said, and felt, represents nothing and stands for nothing. He has no

anchor to his soul. Day after day he is content to pour out from his presses a turgid stream of trifles—little bits of information, little tags of opinion, little stories of men and women. What is the meaning of it all? What is the good of it all? Northcliffe's character was summed up in a phrase, which, curiously enough, had been used before about another man of the same type and character. "He is a genius," said his critics, "without a soul."

It was to describe Napoleon that this phrase had been used in the first instance. Napoleon, the Child of the Revolution, the upholder, against all Europe, of the sovereignty of Man, of Red Blood against Blue Blood, of nationhood against class, remains to this day, in many minds, a figure without moral direction. A prolonged study of that great life has convinced me that the reason why it has been so grossly misunderstood is that it has too often been judged from the point of view of class prejudice. Napoleon's power rested on the French peasantry, and these men and women understood him and felt his moral force.

"Long, long will they tell of him under the thatched roof.

"In fifty years the humble dwelling will know no other history.

"Children, through this village I saw him ride, followed by kings."

The aristocracies of Europe, the academic minds of Europe, and the clerical minds of Europe, felt nothing but the weight of his authority. His soul and their souls were not in tune with each other.

Those who felt that Northcliffe had genius but no moral direction lived, I believe, within an order of ideas of which Northcliffe was the enemy. They were conscious of

antagonism against their most cherished convictions, and because these convictions supplied the moral direction of their own lives they came, inevitably, to the conclusion that his life lacked this essential quality. All the force of the man, all his young enthusiasms, all his boundless energy were discounted because their object could not be discerned.

That object, however, was clear to the immense multitudes who eagerly purchased his newspapers—to the nation as a whole. The nation as a whole did not feel that Northcliffe lacked moral direction. It felt, every day, his sympathy with and understanding of its difficulties and struggles. It felt his strong patriotism; his sense of fair play for the "common man"; his joy of simple things; his love of the romance of life; his wish that everybody should enjoy life and be grateful for life as he enjoyed and was grateful for it. It felt the thankfulness of the man, and his kindness; and his hatred of cruelty in every form touched it very closely. There were those, as I have said, who found nothing of a moral direction in the gardening competitions and the ideal home competitions of the *Daily Mail*; they were, for the most part, so fortunate as not to stand in need of such help. There were others who found no moral direction in the campaign against the German menace; they had not, presumably, imagined a world in which freedom—the sovereignty of Man—had ceased to exist. News, the human stories of every passing day, was the means which Northcliffe used towards the achievement of his ultimate purpose; those who failed to see the end necessarily condemned the means as frivolous. In the eyes of every class or caste, a general appeal is always suspect, and a popular object is always vulgar.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### “THE TIMES”

“MR. X.” had his own ideas about the dignity of *The Times* and he was determined that this should not be lowered :

“One of the most valuable advertising supporters of *The Times*,” says Mr. Kitchin, “was a leading firm of brandy importers. . . . Lord Northcliffe came down on me in furious wrath. Never, he declared, had *The Times* been so utterly disgraced as by accepting this page of barrels. . . . I added that we wanted money badly. ‘Your excuse,’ flashed back Lord Northcliffe, ‘is that of a burglar or embezzler. Never take an advertisement because you want money.’ ”

Northcliffe, to the end of his life, continued to act on this principle. He refused countless advertisements the nature of which, or even the look of which, did not please him. That he was right in this policy is evident. A newspaper’s first duty is towards its readers, not towards its advertisers. Advertisers are business men who are buying a commodity—space—because it is of value to themselves. They possess no rights of any sort beyond the space which they buy and they ought to be under the necessity of employing their purchase in such a fashion as not to offend the eyes or the feelings of

the newspapers' readers. Northcliffe never suffered advertisers to suppose that they did him a favour by taking space in his papers ; on the contrary he made them aware of the fact that they received good value for their money. The more severe his censorship became, the more eagerly was his “space” competed for. Yet, as I have said, he was punctilious in his care that such advertisements as were accepted should be properly shown. There was an occasion when he complained bitterly that the delicate lace-work on some dresses, which were figured in an advertisement, was “all smudged.”

“What woman,” he demanded, “is going to buy goods of that appearance?”

He ordered that the price of that advertisement should be returned to the advertiser, or, alternatively, that a second advertisement should be displayed free of charge.

These methods, no less than the reorganization of the news service of the paper, brought *The Times* very quickly back to its commanding position. For *The Times* itself was full of strength and vigour. The only considerable change which occurred in its staff was the resignation, after a quarter of a century of service, of its editor, Mr. George Buckle, and the appointment in his place of Mr. Geoffrey Dawson. Roughly speaking, then, the immense prosperity which the great journal began to enjoy in 1909 was achieved with the aid of that body of writers who had been selected by, and who had served, the Walter family.

This point deserves emphasis. Northcliffe had no illusions about the staff of *The Times*. He knew that it was a good staff, carefully chosen, enormously competent and inspired by the highest ideals. He respected it and he treated

it in the most considerate manner. The staff of *The Times* responded to that respect and to that treatment. I say, without fear of contradiction, that there is no place in which the memory of this great man is held to-day in more abiding respect than *The Times* office. That office did not always see eye to eye with him; but it knew him for what he was—a supreme genius in his own profession. It accepted gladly the advice and direction which he bestowed and it mourned him when he died. It had remained faithful, as any reader of *The Times* may see any day, to the principles which he inculcated.

“The staff of *The Times*,” said Northcliffe on one occasion, “loves *The Times* and serves *The Times*. And it will give its loyal adhesion to anybody who has the interest of *The Times* at heart.”

That is the exact truth. *The Times* is much greater than any individual and overshadows all those who serve it whether as proprietors or workers. Northcliffe was content that it should be so in his case, just as the Walter family had always been content that it should be so in theirs. He never tried to become “The Man of *The Times*.” But the fascination of the great newspaper held him captive from the beginning. Latterly he had a room in *The Times* office in which he spent most of his time, and that room, with its severe furnishings and its plain green curtains, was dearer to him than all the palatial apartments of his other offices.

Northcliffe, in *The Times* office, was a working journalist, and he worked, to some extent, under the Editor. Those who imagine that the Editor of *The Times* was at any time the

humble servant of his principal proprietor imagine without knowledge of the facts. A day did come, after years of association, when Editor and principal proprietor disagreed fundamentally ; on that day the Editor tendered his resignation. Nor was the Editor the only individual who dared to take his stand against Northcliffe. Again and again humble members of the staff opposed their views to those of their principal proprietor. As a rule he encouraged, rather than objected to, such independence because he recognized that it had its deep foundations in jealousy for the honour and the fame of the paper.

“ The staff of *The Times*, ” he said on another occasion, “ would serve it if it had not a penny piece to pay their salaries. There is not a money-grubber among them.”



## CHAPTER XXXII

### SUPERIOR PEOPLE

THESE were the days of the rise to fame and power of Mr. Lloyd George—the days of the National Insurance Act, of the Land Campaign and of the “People’s Budget.” They were days of fervent appeals to class-consciousness in which contrast was made between “peasants and pheasants” and between common folk and “the Dukes.” The country witnessed the first phase of the life of the Man of Birmingham over again.

But times had changed. When Mr. Chamberlain assailed the ruling classes of Britain with the famous phrase: “They toil not neither do they spin,” Britain occupied a position of great security; Mr. Lloyd George’s campaign against “the Dukes” took place under the very muzzles of the Prussian guns.

It was this fact which troubled the mind of Northcliffe. He admired Mr. Lloyd George and said so:

“Like most of his political opponents and critics, I am a great admirer of Mr. Lloyd George.”

But that admiration could not blind him to the fact that the nation was being urged to fierce internal controversy just when union of all its elements was most desperately necessary. Northcliffe’s opposition to Lloyd George was of exactly the

same nature as his opposition to the Chamberlain proposals in their extreme form. Both Tariff Reform and the People's Budget were unseasonable in that they were bones of contention which threatened British security by making it increasingly difficult to secure the additions to the Army and Navy which were then so essential. Tariff Reform had "split" the Conservative party—the party in Northcliffe's view most likely to look to National Defence; the "People's Budget" might have the effect of "splitting" the country itself.

Northcliffe, therefore, continued to support Mr. Balfour, the one man capable of preserving Conservative unity. He opposed the schemes of Mr. Lloyd George, and he continued, by means of *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* and all his other papers, to expose the reality of the German menace. Nothing, in his view, mattered except preparation against "the evil day."

The two General Elections of 1910, which were fought on the People's Budget, and the hostility thereto of the House of Lords cost the Liberal party 100 seats—an indication that the British people were not so anxious as was Mr. Lloyd George to wage a class war against "the Dukes." The Liberal party, however, still possessed a majority in the House of Commons provided that it could secure the support of the eighty Irish Members—all of them Home Rulers. What had happened in the case of Gladstone had happened again in the case of Mr. Asquith (the Prime Minister) and of Mr. Lloyd George. A new Home Rule Bill for Ireland began to loom on the political horizon.

Northcliffe and those who thought as he thought—they were a small band—were filled with consternation. At the

moment of her greatest need Britain seemed to have been deserted altogether by fortune. The Conservative party, that former bulwark of nationalism, was still rent asunder by the Chamberlain policy. A fierce class war was being preached in England itself while, in Ireland, already, at the mere threat of Home Rule, Protestants were arming themselves against Catholics and Catholics against Protestants.

Worse by far than all this was the fact that that great King and statesman, Edward VII, whose courage and devotion had made the *Entente* with France, and whose immense influence was exercised ceaselessly to defeat the plottings of Germany, had been carried to his grave.

In these depressing circumstances Northcliffe, almost alone now, continued his campaign of warning until even some of his friends began to protest that he was "taking a jaundiced view of life." He laid down three separate and distinct rules for the conduct of his campaign. His newspapers at home must tell the public morning, noon and night about what Germany was planning. His newspapers abroad, the Continental edition of the *Daily Mail* and the foreign side of *The Times*, must exert themselves to the utmost to improve British relations with France. He himself proposed to go to America and acquaint that great democracy with the details of the assault which feudalism, in its last and most hateful form, was about to launch against the sovereignty of Man.

That visit to America passed unnoticed in this country. But it roused the intense interest and anger of Germany, so that every conceivable agency of German propaganda on the American continent was mobilized against Northcliffe.

As in our own country, simple folk, who might have known better but didn't, lent themselves to the work of pouring abuse on "Northcliffe the scaremonger," "Northcliffe the stirrer up of hatred against peace-loving Germany." In many cases the attacks which were made were perfectly sincere and were inspired by a real belief that Northcliffe was trying to foment war.

"Lord Northcliffe," cried one Transatlantic newspaper of the most unquestioned and unquestionable patriotism, "is a gamester in politics. He cares for the stakes, not for the game. He has really no grasp on political problems. . . . His level is the level of the crowd. His ambition is to play the part of a Tsar. The instrument of his exploitation is the Press. . . .

"The *Daily Mail*, with more than twenty times the circulation of its once dignified and once truly aristocratically (*The Times*), is tuned to stir the worst social and political passions of the uneducated English multitude. *The Times* does the classical drama for the 'saving remnant.' The *Daily Mail* does vaudeville and music-hall turns for the 'million gods of the gallery.' . . .

"It will be a marvel if relations with Germany are not strained until war becomes inevitable as a direct result of the war-scare campaign inaugurated and carried on with the most reckless and maddening ingenuity by the Northcliffe syndicate of newspapers. . . . In the British campaign (the political campaign of 1910) there is nothing more shocking . . . than Lord Northcliffe's utterly wicked and mischievous incitement of anti-German war-passion. Here is a Peer of the Realm, the posed journalistic Napoleon of the party

once led by Salisbury, making the chief feature of his newspaper campaign in support of Salisbury's nephew (Lord Balfour) a series of daily articles by Robert Blatchford, the editor of *The Clarion*, the blatant exponent of the very Socialism which both Salisbury and Balfour deliberately and almost fiercely condemned as the bottomless Tophet of British politics. And this irresponsible revolutionist is engaged by Lord Northcliffe to write, day after day, for the *Daily Mail* the most superheated, war-scare shrieking that was ever given type outside revolutionist journalism. Every sentence is drawn to inflame street passion in England and, when republished in German newspapers, to incite Anglophobia into a rage. With a kind of gloating Lord Northcliffe's journal quotes the sensational comments of the German Press. He cares nothing at all that he is scattering firebrands among the powder magazines of European politics so long as his half-penny journal can boast a 'daily circulation five times as large as that of any penny London morning journal.' "

Articles to the same effect appeared in German, in the German American Press—a tribute to Northcliffe's speeches in America and to Blatchford's articles in the *Daily Mail*. It is a matter of some interest and instruction to note that the tenor of this abuse is the same as the tenor of much of the contemporaneous talk of "superior people" at home about Northcliffe. One is almost tempted to think that all the "superior people" of the world echoed the same cry which a wisdom greater than their own had cunningly planned that they should echo. Germany achieved no more remarkable triumph in the years before the war than her successful

wooing of the "superior people" of this country and America. She had, I think, fathomed the secret of superior people everywhere—their vanity. It was only necessary to whisper :

"You of course are an educated man, a man of the world ; you know how ineffably vulgar and stupid is this Harmsworth. . . . Do you realize, however, how dangerous he may become ? "

In almost every case the bird came hopping into the net. I have often pictured the exquisite cynicism of manner in which the German propagandists—the men who prepared for 1914—must have talked to all the pacifists and "superior" folk of Europe whom they managed to deceive. A sparrowhawk, arousing the enthusiasm of a bunch of sparrows for the cause of vegetarianism among birds, would scarcely have provided a more engaging spectacle.

Blatchford's articles in the *Daily Mail* were by no means "superior," but they were very much to the point.

"I write these articles," he declared, "because I believe that Germany is deliberately preparing to destroy the British Empire and because I know that we are not able or ready to defend ourselves against a sudden and formidable attack."

Statesmen in Britain, who had not apprehended what was so obvious to less exalted intelligences than their own, deprecated these attempts :

"to make your blood creep with horrible misgivings as to the designs of a great, friendly, foreign Power,"

and an illustrious English Liberal newspaper which seemed

to think that Northcliffe was conducting his campaign solely in the interests of the Conservative party declared :

“Deliberately to rake the fires of hell for votes, as these people are doing, is an act of political depravity, that no party extremity can excuse. Can these people really believe all that they pretend to believe about Germany?”

Four years only, at that time, separated Europe from the deluge. The last touches were, even then, being put to the great “military machine” of Prussia.

Northcliffe, in America, spoke temperately but with unequivocal firmness :

“There is,” he declared, in an interview with the *Tribune* of New York, “an impression in this country that some hostility exists between the peoples of Great Britain and of united Germany. I know the Germans intimately. From childhood I have travelled extensively throughout most of the German states, and I venture to say that, outside the usual body of Anglophobes one meets in every country, there is little hostility to the British on the part of the Germans, and on the other hand there is in England no dislike of Germany. . . .

“Why then worry? Those of our people who think as I do are looking ahead. We have the official figures of the German naval programme up to 1912, which are serious enough, but we know that these figures are just as inaccurate as were the figures made public by Germany prior to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.”

There was much comment on this statement. One prominent Boston newspaper said :

“ Lord Northcliffe, as the managing owner of the London *Times*, enjoys special facilities for being posted on European political movements which are beyond the vision of the general public. What he says is to be carefully weighed, for his position implies a sense of the graveness of his utterances. Nevertheless, after making these allowances in his favour, it can still be said that the analogy between 1869 and 1909 is far from clear to anyone who takes an impartial point of view. There is, for example, no specific, tangible, irritating cause of grievance on the part of either Germany or Great Britain against the other apparent.”

Northcliffe's visit to America served the purpose of awakening public interest among that mighty people in the most important movement then proceeding in the world. His campaign at home served the purpose of convincing Britain that Germany's designs were not only designs against France but that, in this matter, Britain and France, and America too, stood side by side, democracies of free men against the greatest anti-democratic force which had ever existed on the earth. His campaign in France helped to assure Frenchmen that their struggle for freedom and for the principles of the Revolution was understood at last on the other side of the Channel.

Has any statesman of that year, 1910—any statesman in any land—so great a service to his country and to the world standing to his credit as the service which Northcliffe rendered ?



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THAT WHICH THEY WISHED TO HEAR

THE one-time Editor of *The Bicycling News* had not forgotten his first enthusiasm for machines. There came a day in Northcliffe's life when he heard that two young men in America had actually flown in a machine which was heavier than air—an aeroplane. A little later, at Pau, Northcliffe met the brothers Wilbur and Orville Wright, and saw with his own eyes the modern miracle. Immediately on his return to London—the year was 1906—he offered, in the *Daily Mail*, a prize of £10,000 to the first person who should fly in one day from London to Manchester.

The offer set London and all England in a roar of mirth, and *Punch* at once offered three prizes of £10,000 for (1) a flight to Mars and back in a week, (2) a trip to the centre of the earth in a fortnight, and (3) a swim across the Atlantic before the end of the year. Four years later, in April 1910, just when the campaign for the People's Budget was at its height, M. Paulhan, a Frenchman, won the *Daily Mail* prize in a contest against Mr. Graham White which held the amazed and fascinated interest of the whole world. The *Daily Mail* flight round Britain (£10,000) followed in the following year.

“The impelling motive,” declared the *Daily Mail* at a later period, “which forced the *Daily Mail* on its campaign

for aerial development was Germany. It realized that the day of conflict with Germany was drawing near and that in the war that was ahead, aerial supremacy would be one of the deciding factors. Germany was awake to this: England was not."

For this service alone Northcliffe deserves the eternal gratitude of his fellow-countrymen. His prizes for successful flights were the foundation of the British Air Force. *Had that force been less efficient than it proved during the war, the result of the war must have been different.*

But the superior people saw only "vulgar advertisement" in the *Daily Mail* flights. Where, they asked, with the ripe fatuousness of the Mad Hatter himself, is the "moral direction" of an aeroplane? Northcliffe lacked the time to reply to them. In the year 1911 Lord Roberts, that gallant little man, had begun his campaign for compulsory military service and the whole power of the "Northcliffe Press" was being employed to support him.

What a campaign it was and what a contrast it presented to the great Tariff Reform Mission or the evangelistic fervour of the People's Budget. Lord Roberts spoke for the most part to empty benches: he and his "militarism" were literally laughed out of court. But Northcliffe drove home, day after day, the speeches which nobody had heard. He compelled attention to these speeches by every device known to the greatest master of publicity of his age. Lord Roberts' campaign made headway in spite of the empty benches and the sneering politicians, in spite of Tariff Reform, in spite even of the People's Budget. The "superior people" vented their exasperation in the expression "un-British."

At the same time Northcliffe devoted his whole strength to defeating a project known as "The Declaration of London," which he rightly described as "Sea Law Made in Germany," a project which, had it succeeded, would have sent our Navy into the war with a severe handicap.

Lord Balfour adopted the same view as the *Daily Mail* and spoke outside of and inside of Parliament against the Declaration. Parliament, as a consequence, refused to ratify the measure.

No sooner was that victory secured than a fresh danger arose as a consequence of the agitations of the Tariff Reformers. The cry, "B. M. G."—"Balfour must go"—had been raised by these class-conscious Conservatives with such insistence that Balfour had gone, yielding place, as Leader of the Conservative party, to Mr. Bonar Law, a Scotsman of Canadian upbringing, who supported zealously the whole Chamberlain programme. Northcliffe saw in this move a step likely to prejudice still further the unity of the Conservative party, and in January of 1913 he spoke out against the palpable attempt being made by the Tariff Reformers to "cleanse" the party of all those who did not share their views on the subject of taxes on food :

"If an attitude of demanding silent obedience under the threat of resignation," said the *Daily Mail*, "were adopted by the Leader of the party (Mr. Bonar Law) it would be a disastrous one. It would condemn the party, which has already been seven years out of office, to a much more prolonged period of opposition and would give a free hand to Mr. Lloyd George with his scheme of public plunder."

A howl of rage from the Tariff Reformers greeted this plain speaking.

“Lord Northcliffe and his myrmidons of Carmelite House and Printing House Square,” cried the *Morning Post*, “have sounded all manner of instruments from the sounding brass to the tinkling cymbal. But, fortunately for the country, the Unionist party has not fallen so low as to make the cry of the street-corner the substitute for its considered principles. Catching votes at all costs is an ignoble game which may be left to those who find it profitable. Surely Lord Northcliffe does not aspire to the rôle of political leader.”

Lord Northcliffe certainly did not aspire to that rôle. He was, on the contrary, pleading, almost piteously, for leadership such as that which, in vain, Lord Balfour had tried to bestow on his party. He was opposing nationalism to the class-consciousness with which both the great political parties of that day were so heavily infected.

He spoke, as I believe, with the authentic voice of Britain. Neither Tariff Reform nor the principles of the People's Budget have prevailed; both to-day are utterly lifeless. But both have left behind them their “heritage of hate,” an atmosphere of class-consciousness in which master and man stand glaring at one another in mistrust and misconception, and in which politics, in the large national sense, have no place. To-day, perhaps, we can afford to take risks of this kind; in the year 1913 we stood on the very edge of the abyss, unwarned even by the Agadir crisis or by the events of the Balkan wars in which the hand of German militarism was so palpably evident.

Yet I believe that Northcliffe's incursions into the Tariff Reform controversy were not entirely fruitless. These incursions did help to prevent an open rupture between Unionist food taxers and Unionist free traders ; they did tend to remind the party as a whole of its national mission. And they held the attention of the public fixed on the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. Northcliffe urged his readers to forget their classes and their occupations when they approached the political arena and to remember only their patriotism. He urged them to think and vote in the spirit of those who gave to their country rather than in the spirit of those who hoped to get benefits—whether in the form of protective taxes or of “rare and refreshing fruit”—from her. He opposed to the “attractions” of the class-conscious a high ideal of service. While the Tariff Reformers were promising higher wages and shorter hours and Mr. Lloyd George was promising a new heaven and a new earth, the Man of the *Daily Mail* offered only compulsory military service and iron discipline by which the patriot prepares his soul for sacrifice.

It is strange that Northcliffe should have been accused so often of telling his readers only that which they wished to hear. But I think that the charge may not be altogether without substance nevertheless. Britons, as was soon to be proved, did want to hear the call of patriotism and of duty, and were indeed eager to give their all for their beloved land.

Northcliffe's faith in the New Democracy of Britain was boundless—to the politicians it seemed foolishness indeed—but who shall say that it lacked its justification?

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### “THE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC OPINION”

I HAVE often wondered what the attitude of the New Democracy of Britain would have been in 1914 if Northcliffe had never existed. More than any other man he had influenced the mind of this new democracy—for millions upon millions of men and women, of boys and girls, of children even, bought his publications every week during years and eagerly imbibed his ideas. Would these millions, in his absence, have imbibed the same ideas from other sources? Or would other ideas have become established in their minds? And if so, what other ideas?

Northcliffe himself believed that his service consisted merely in bringing up into consciousness the latent and unconscious instinct of the mass of his fellow-countrymen. “Britons will be Britons” was the way he expressed this faith. No doubt he was right; yet I think that his influence and his evangel cannot be discounted to the extent to which he was himself ready to discount them. His enemies, at any rate, have always paid him the tribute of believing him to have exercised an immense power for evil. I have often heard the grotesque accusation levelled against him that he “made the Great War”—it is true that the same people are always ready to declare, when any service of value which he rendered is mentioned, that Northcliffe “had no real influence, my dear sir.” But you cannot have it both ways.

My own conviction hardens with the years that the New Democracy of Britain, as we know it to-day, is largely Northcliffe's creation. That he warned our country of its great danger when other men saw no danger at all is, in my opinion, a lesser matter than that he brought into millions of British homes, in the days of awakening democratic consciousness, the truth about Britain and about the nations and peoples surrounding her, and that he held steadily before his vast audience the ideals of patriotism and of self-sacrifice, that he preached continuously the doctrine of the sovereignty of Man and of Man's goodness and courage and patience and wisdom and honour, that he aroused in countless hearts the impulses of chivalry, and in countless minds interest in the English countryside, in healthful pursuits and in manly exercises, that he inculcated pride of home and of person and exalted the romance of life, its joy and its enthusiasm, and that, as a result of these efforts, he created a vast public opinion, loyal to and proud of the institutions of the past, yet eager to press forward towards a better and a happier future. In the hour of trial, when small men counselled the easy way of neutrality towards Germany's assault on democracy, the seed which Northcliffe had sown came, I think, to the harvest.

That hour, as the year 1913 drew to its close, was at hand, yet men's minds in Britain were agitated by thoughts remote from the designs of Prussia. The new Home Rule Bill had already brought about a state of affairs in Ireland which rather closely resembled civil war. An army was drilling in Ulster; another army was being recruited in the south of Ireland.

In the spring of 1914, that year of fate, a group of famous war correspondents were actually gathered in Belfast in anticipation of the struggle which most people believed to be imminent. Northcliffe himself visited Belfast and I met him there.

His attitude to the whole controversy was strangely detached. He had come, so he said, to make sure that whatever might happen, the news would reach his papers, and this was his chief preoccupation. He thought, apparently, that, if civil war did break out, the telephone and telegraph wires would be cut, for he chartered an ocean-going tug-steamer which, during the several weeks that the crisis lasted, lay under a full head of steam in Donaghadee harbour. He also established a service of motor-cars and motor-cycles to take dispatches to his steamer, and I believe that arrangements were made with the railway authorities at Portpatrick, on the Scottish coast, to supply, at very short notice, a special train to London.

Nothing, in fact, was left to chance in this supremely important matter of News. Had the Irish Civil War broken out, Northcliffe's papers would certainly have been "first with the news" of every important happening. Northcliffe's sympathies, of course, were with the Ulstermen; yet I think that this spectacle of preparations for civil war filled him with the liveliest regret and uneasiness. He saw, so clearly, the danger of what was afoot. Someone, I remember, told him that there were a number of young Germans staying at one of the Belfast hotels and evidently interesting themselves deeply in the events of the Irish crisis.



“Of course,” he said in his quick, quiet, incisive way. “The Germans have been watching every move in Ireland for years.”

Later on the same day he complained, in person, to the organizers of the Ulster Army that they were withholding news from his papers and so prejudicing their own cause.

“How can you expect,” he asked, “to win the support of public opinion if you do not take the public into your confidence?”

I do not think that the Ulster leaders were troubling very much, at the moment, about public opinion. They did not, apparently, share Northcliffe’s view that without such support their cause was irrevocably lost. When men take arms in their hands, they are apt to suppose that “the time for talk” has passed.

The same false reasoning was destined, within a few months, to bring the British Empire within measurable distance of collapse and ruin.

## BOOK III

### THE REAPING

*"This gigantic revolution, which is the greatest that has happened since Christianity, is the mere prelude to an upheaval of the world."*

—NORTHCLIFFE, in 1916, on The Great War.



## CHAPTER XXXV

“HUSH ! HUSH !”

THE British people entered the Great War in silence and in deep humility. The contrast between this spirit and the “growls and scowls,” the shouting and the jubilation of the early days of the Boer War, was very strange and very striking. In an hour, it seemed, every man and every woman was transformed. The warnings which had been given—and forgotten—returned to every mind. We knew, without knowing how we knew, that the hour of our fate had struck and that all we loved and cherished in life was at stake.

And that was the whole extent of our knowledge. The rest was darkness. The whole nation, as if by a common impulse, yearned for enlightenment.

I was in Belgium in those days and listened to the recital of frantic hopes with which the brave citizens of Brussels received the news of the defence of Liège. It was impossible to hear that story of heroism without being thrilled to the marrow ; yet, to my astonishment, I learned that, already, all kinds of restrictions on the telling of the story were being imposed. The Allied Command meant, so it was stated, to hold the newspaper press in stern control, and my own countrymen were even more determined on this point than were the Belgians and the French.

The story was told, nevertheless ; for the enterprise of British war correspondents proved superior to all obstacles. It electrified the world and struck, if I may use the term, the earliest note of victory.

And then even the enterprise of the war correspondents proved unavailing. The curtain of secrecy was rung down, and the war became hidden from the peoples who were waging it.

This policy occasioned Northcliffe the most acute uneasiness. His views about the nature and duration of the war were widely different from those of most other Englishmen and he believed that, if victory was to be won, every ounce of our national strength, every hour of our national courage would be required. How were such iron sacrifices to be achieved without the force of an instructed public opinion ?

“ You cannot carry on this war in the dark,” I heard him say very early in the campaign, “ because no people which is kept in ignorance of the truth will consent to make the tremendous sacrifices which are going to be required.”

Northcliffe, in 1914, believed and expressed his belief that in order to win the war it would be necessary to conscript the whole manhood of Britain, to ration her population and to control all her industries. *He knew that these things could not be accomplished unless the British people realized the need for them.* The British people could not realize the need for them unless they were furnished daily with *news* about the war.

And by *news* Northcliffe did not mean official *communiqués*,

with their dry and unedifying language. These statements, as he so well understood, convinced nobody and enlightened nobody; they did not arouse enthusiasm; they did not awaken determination; they did not move man or woman by so much as an added heart-beat. Could the men who were running the war not understand that news to be effective must be human?

I saw Northcliffe often at this time and I shall always cherish the memory of those meetings. He was intensely worried and also intensely bewildered. The great victory of the Marne had made him sure that Germany had no hope provided that Britain exerted her full strength. But he could not see how Britain's full strength was to be mobilized without public opinion, and he believed—who, to-day, will deny that he was right?—that our country possessed no instructed public opinion about the war. Secrecy had smothered the truth.

I felt, at the time, that Northcliffe would not remain silent for ever. He gave me the impression then, in the late autumn of 1914, of a man who is weighing his duty.

After visiting a barge fitted up as an ambulance we went for a walk, one day, in the Bois in Paris. He scarcely spoke a word until we reached the lake, and then he began to talk, once more, about the need of news. He was extraordinarily earnest, and I can still see his fine, mobile face as he developed his views.

"People do not seem to know," he said, "that a newspaper lives from one day to another on public opinion. The Press can never be irresponsible."

I wondered what was coming. A shadow darkened his face :

“ I have been called the enemy of the British Army because of what *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* published about the retreat from Mons,” he said, at last, in a very quiet tone. “ That hurt me more than anything else in my life.”

His voice was not quite steady. He had, clearly, been greatly distressed. He added :

“ It was true what we said about the retreat from Mons. If only we had turned that glorious truth to our advantage.”

At luncheon I met a number of the correspondents of his newspapers who had been called to Paris to confer with him. They all complained that it was impossible to obtain news ; the “ zone of the armies ” was sealed up. One of them told a curious story about a man, who was not present, a younger member of the staff of *The Times*. This young journalist had been warned that any indiscretion on his part in the course of his work as a war correspondent might be visited on *The Times* itself. He made a gallant attempt to reach the French front and was promptly arrested there as a spy. Immediately he resolved on no account to admit the fact that he had any connexion with *The Times*.

The result of this magnificent but foolhardy reticence can be imagined. The French officers before whom he was conducted naturally considered that his evasive replies about the nature of his business at the front were in the highest degree unsatisfactory. They had, indeed, reached the conclusion

that they were dealing with a spy, when, in course of searching the young man, they found in one of his pockets a highly eulogistic article about themselves, addressed to *The Times*.

“ What ! You are a journalist, are you ? ”

*The Times* office in Paris was at once communicated with by telephone and the fact of identity confirmed. A rather grim scene was transformed into a meeting of friends.

Northcliffe listened to this story with deep interest. He was becoming accustomed to hearing that his men had been arrested as spies, but the courage of this particular correspondent pleased him. Later in the day he drove out to Versailles to visit a hospital. He remarked on the way :

“ If one says one is a thief or an assassin these days, people only smile. But if one says one is a journalist, they shudder. To be a journalist to-day is to be a leper.”

He spoke gravely rather than bitterly. He looked rather tired and, during most of the journey, leaned back in the car. His face in that position was extraordinarily gentle—a quality not usually associated with Northcliffe. Suddenly, as we neared Versailles, he leaned forward :

“ If they only knew it,” he exclaimed, “ journalists are more important to the winning of the war even than Generals.”

Again I had the feeling that something was going to happen. And I hoped fervently that something would happen, for I had had my own experiences of the “ war against journalists.” Some weeks before I had been arrested myself during the battle of the Aisne and hauled before a British Colonel who happened, why I do not know, to be with the French at the place where the arrests took place. I had



been marched up a village street by a soldier with a fixed bayonet and I confess that I had not enjoyed it much. Nor was the British colonel particularly cheering. I don't think that he really suspected me; but he pretended that he suspected me. And I felt, for the first time in my life, the sensations of a man whose personal honour has been wrongfully called in question.

"How did you manage to get here?" my colonel asked me, I remember.

"By ambulance train."

"What. . . . But they have orders. . . ."

I cut him short. "I hid myself in the train."

"Why?"

"To get news."

His look recalled to my mind Kipling's description of the British officer whose face seemed "like the Day of Judgment framed in grey bristles."

"You have no right," he said, "to try and get news. Do you realize that you are acting against the interests of your country?"

After this pronouncement I was conducted out of the room by a genial adjutant in order that my captor might deliberate on the best way of dealing with me. The adjutant told me, when the door was shut, that I need not worry as they were satisfied that my papers were in order. A little later I was recalled to the "presence" and thus addressed:

"Correspondents of the Press are not permitted within the zone of the armies. You have broken the regulations,

and I could, if I cared, have you confined to a fortress for the duration of the war. Instead I am going to send you back to Paris, but you must sign a promise to return at once to England and not to come back to France without the consent of the War Office."

I signed, of course, and was then escorted to the railway station and placed in a French ambulance train where I spent the night. The train stopped outside of the fortifications of Paris and I had to walk along the rails to reach the city. While doing this I was arrested a second time and brought before a French officer who, however, proved much more friendly than my colonel of the morning.

My experience was that of every single writer who tried to obtain first-hand information about the war. Thanks to orders from England—(the French were much more accommodating than our own people)—a clean sweep was soon made of all the journalists in the war area, whether professional or, like myself, amateur. News, so far as the newspapers were concerned, ceased to exist. The military authorities told the people at home exactly as much as they supposed that it was necessary that the people at home should know.

Nevertheless, I got my leave from the War Office to return to France . . . for what reason need not be stated here. Naturally enough my views about the wisdom of the "Hush, hush" policy were identical with Northcliffe's views. I had been in Amiens on the night on which—after I managed to get out of the place—the Germans entered. I had seen the chaos and confusion prevailing everywhere and had heard quite enough about the retreat from Mons to know that every

word which was published by Northcliffe's papers on that subject was true. I had seen, too, the terrible ambulance trains in which the wounded from Mons were being conveyed to the coast, brakeless wagons, which jostled together every time the engine stopped with appalling consequences to the victims of broken bones. I believed that news about the inadequacy of the ambulance service—to give but a single instance—was most urgently required in England.

Northcliffe had already given this news on the day when we drove out to Versailles. He had already put the whole resources of *The Times* at the disposal of the Joint Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. (I heard later that it was owing to his personal insistence that these Societies were induced to make common cause.) *The Times* ambulances and medical and surgical stores of all sorts were beginning to reach France, and the days of horror, so far as the wounded men were concerned, were ending. Sir Alfred Keogh, too, had been placed at the head of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

It was public opinion which had achieved these blessings—that, and that alone. And in this case, as in so many other cases, the man at my side had supplied the raw material of public opinion, *news*.

We came to the hospital at Versailles and found the American Ambassador, Mr. Herrick, there before us. Northcliffe had brought an immense quantity of cigars and cigarettes and chocolates with him and he distributed them to those of the patients who were allowed to receive them. He spent a good deal of time talking in German to some German prisoners who lay in a little ward by themselves and

what I overheard of his conversation surprised me—when a friend translated it. It was so extraordinarily kind and friendly. The Germans had a full share of the gifts. Afterwards, on the way back to Paris, Northcliffe said that he pitied the German people who were being "led like sheep."

"Those poor fellows told me," he declared, "how grateful they were for all that was being done for them."

The "ruthless Northcliffe," on this afternoon at any rate, entirely belied his character.

A few days later we visited the American hospital together—the Lycée Pasteur—and saw the truly noble work which America was inaugurating as a "gift to humanity." Northcliffe attached immense importance to this gift and incidentally told me how much he loved America and the American people.

"They will not remain neutral," he prophesied. "I know them too well to believe that. But at present we have no news to send them about what we are doing and why we are doing it."

His mind, I think, dwelt perpetually on this matter of news. And, always, his bewilderment that the authorities did not see the problem as he saw it, increased.

Before he left Paris he visited Lord Robert Cecil at the Hotel Jena, where the work of tracing the "Missing" was being initiated by that most devoted worker. Northcliffe offered all his resources of publicity to aid the new enterprise. When we left the building he asked me, in his sudden, impulsive way :

"What is the secret of that man's (Lord Robert Cecil's)

strength?" And immediately answered his own question :  
" His disinterestedness. That man has the love of England  
in his blood and is selfless."

I have often recalled this incident. I believe firmly that  
the estimate of character which Northcliffe offered in the case  
of Lord Robert Cecil applied also to himself.

He too had the love of England in his blood : he too was  
without thought of self.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### IF YOUTH BUT KNEW

THE British people heard little or nothing about the tremendous "First Battle of Ypres"—the most supremely glorious encounter in the whole of our national history. But Northcliffe knew the facts of this miracle of human endurance at a very early moment. It was then, I think, that he reached out to the greatest and most momentous decision of his whole life. On December 30, 1914, the *New York Sun* published a statement by him in which he declared his belief that Germany could not win the war provided that the Allies used all their resources. He added :

"You ask me if I believe the necessary army can be raised by voluntary service. Personally I don't. You'll remember that you could not do so in 1861. My personal belief is that we shall be obliged to adopt conscription as you eventually did. . . . We shall fight with all the resources of our manhood, our shipyards, our wealth, our British tenacity. We will go under rather than give in. . . . It is no doubt disappointing to English and American business men to learn that there are people like myself who regard this gigantic struggle as a matter of years rather than months."

This expression of opinion was reflected, of course, in

Northcliffe's own newspapers. It aroused a storm of the most violent protest. A howl of execration was immediately raised against Northcliffe :

“ You have preached war,” cried a morning paper, “ and exploited international hatreds as a trade ; you have attacked every country in turn, and you have attacked it for the basest reasons ; you have supported every cause when you have thought it would win, and deserted it when you have thought it would lose ; you have used your papers to poison the stream of international relationship, to frighten the public with shameful fables, careless of the pain and the anxiety they caused, to embitter human intercourse and to pursue your revenges.”

This same newspaper, on the very day on which war against Germany was declared, had urged :

“ If we remained neutral we should be, from the commercial point of view, in precisely the same position as the United States. We should be able to trade with all the belligerents (so far as the war allows of trade with them) ; we should be able to capture the bulk of their trade in neutral markets ; we should keep our expenditure down ; we should keep out of debt ; we should have healthy finances.”

It was, of course, the advocacy of conscription in the Northcliffe Press which had aroused the excitement. That excitement increased with every new day :

“ Lord Northcliffe knows,” the same newspaper declared,

“as all Fleet Street knows, that if Sir Edward Grey or Lord Kitchener or General Joffre were asked which British journal had done most injury to the diplomatic and military interests of the Allies and had most unquestionably ‘played the enemy’s game’ they would all point to *The Times*.”

There was a grain of substance in this assertion. It is just possible that Lord Kitchener might have “pointed to *The Times*” had his opinion been invited. For already, within five months of his appointment as War Minister—which appointment, by general consent, was made in response to the urgent promptings of the Northcliffe Press—Lord Kitchener had become antagonistic to Northcliffe. This is how, at a later period, the same newspaper described the events leading up to this estrangement :

“Lord Northcliffe saw that he could stampede the Government in a moment of excitement and the streets flamed with his placards about the ‘Haldane Scandal’ and his demands for the appointment of Lord Kitchener. And in *The Times*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Evening News* and the *Weekly Dispatch* he called for Lord Kitchener with varying degrees of violence. The prestige of Lord Kitchener was so great that the Government yielded.

“Lord Northcliffe had won his first great victory in the war. He had made his nominee head of the War Office and he now looked for his reward. He was Cæsar’s Cæsar. But he had mistaken Lord Kitchener. That distinguished soldier, like Mr. Asquith, is not a gentleman who cultivates



the Press or politicians. He declined to be the tool of Lord Northcliffe . . . above all he refused to declare for conscription."

Lord Kitchener had indeed refused to declare for conscription—because the Liberal Government of that day had told him that conscription in any shape or form was out of the question and must at once, if proposed, lead to civil disturbance and the loss of the war. Kitchener accepted this estimate for two reasons, both of which were sound in themselves. In the first place he could not and did not pretend to be able to estimate domestic public opinion. His life had been spent away from England in India and Africa and Egypt, and he was, to a large extent, out of touch with British life. Secondly he had already had some trying experiences in the course of his efforts to obtain supplies of shells and other ammunition for the army. He had found himself "up against" various employers and various Trade Unions rules and regulations and had obtained an insight into the rather strained relations existing in many places between labour and capital. These experiences and that insight convinced him that what the politicians told him about the "temper of the people" was right and that the people would not, in fact, tolerate conscription, whether military or industrial, on any consideration.

So Kitchener placed such orders for such shells as he could place and continued to address appeals to the manhood of the nation to enlist in the fighting services of its own free will. And he continued, also, to refuse to supply the British people with any real war news.

Not once, apparently, did it occur to this great man that all his troubles, all the vexations and grievous burdens which aged him so quickly, in the middle of his gigantic task, were directly due to his failure to take the public into his confidence and allow it to know what was happening in France and Flanders. The "temper of the public," of which a certain section of the politicians made so much and which they used so adroitly to head Kitchener away from conscription, was simply and solely—*ignorance of the truth*. Had the public known the truth Kitchener might, with a stroke of his pen, have conscripted the entire nation and obtained in October 1914, or even earlier, all the men and all the high-explosive shells which his heart desired. He might have saved himself all the ceaseless anxiety and all the petty and disheartening worries which so grievously embittered the last months of his gallant life. It is said, I believe truly, that on one occasion the Man of Khartoum, "the man of cold steel," as his countrymen loved to call him, actually bent his head over his desk in the War Office to hide the tears of vexation and weariness in his eyes. These burdens the British people would have lifted from his shoulders in an hour had he only permitted one single journalist, who knew his job, to tell the "Glorious Story of Ypres."

But Kitchener was "not a gentleman who cultivates the Press." He was blind to the grievous error into which he had fallen—failure to trust, not the Press, but his fellow-countrymen. By means of his recruiting appeals he drew away from industry hundreds of thousands of her bravest and most patriotic sons, leaving behind, by the same act, the rebellious and the unwilling and those who wavered between two

opinions. "Kitchener's Army" was built up literally at the expense of industrial peace.

Worse still, it received recruits who ought never to have been allowed to quit their work—skilled mechanics and engineers, every one of whom was a precious asset to his country. Had a general conscription of the resources of the nation been carried out in 1914, these men would have remained at their forges and work-benches to provide the shells by which alone victory could be won.

They had gone—true and noble-hearted patriots—leaving in many cases wives and young families behind them. And the leaven of their strong faith was lacking in the yards and workshops. Ignorant folk, greedy folk and ill-disposed folk among both masters and men began, in many places, to show a rebellious spirit and to advance their trade or class-interests against the supreme interest of the nation.

And the nation did not know exactly what its supreme interest might be. False prophets, who said that the war was won already, abounded everywhere. There also abounded men who repeated the cry of the Radical politicians that it would be dangerous, in the highest degree, even to mention conscription.

"There is no need of it," cried these optimists and interested persons. "We have won the war already. All is over bar the shouting."

I was in France in those days, and the memory of them haunts me still. My own brother was then in the firing-line, and what I heard from day to day convinced me that I would

never see him again. The most dreadful of all the descriptions to which I listened came from a young Scottish officer whom I met in Boulogne.

“Frankly,” he said, “it’s like a rabbit shoot. *We are the rabbits*. Our guns are rationed ; and we have no high-explosive shells to batter down the barbed wire.”

He seemed to catch his breath :

“It is terrible,” he added, “to see our fellows up against the uncut wire.”

Every British soldier in France was talking that language in the early months of 1915—when the optimists at home were sure that we stood in no need of conscription. What is more, the trenches were being manned by tired troops ; men who had dwelt in hell and made it their home, and who had lost all hope of ever escaping out of it. How could they escape ? The man-power, like the gun-power, was insufficient. The broken fragments of broken battalions had to be ordered back again to the front by men whose hearts quailed, literally, as they gave their orders. Such heroism as was shown by our fellows in those days is unexcelled among the annals of men. Bloody, muddy, broken, exhausted, without hope and without help, they fought on, in desperate faith and with most sublime courage that Britain—and mankind—might live.

And meanwhile, in Britain, brave men who knew nothing of this awful glory, stood stiffly by their rights, whether as employers or employed, when the War Office cried to them for ammunitions and the sinews of war ; and brave lads, who

had scarcely thought about the war, played their games and dreamed their dreams. "Business as usual," cried the optimists, with a smirk of self-satisfaction, as if, in that fatal phrase, they recognized themselves as true sons of their country.

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

I can hear still the sound of the laugh of a young fellow who read this line in an English newspaper at my breakfast-table in Boulogne on the morning on which he was due to return to the front. He laughed and was silent, but his laughter echoed from all the four walls of the room. He was so young, so lately married, and he had endured so much. I could not bear to say good-bye to him when the moment came to say "Good-bye."

He went away telling me that he was a horrible coward and would give all that he possessed for just one more day of safety. . . .

*"They also serve who only stand and wait."* . . .

They stood, ten deep, in England, "serving by waiting," on that clear, good morning when life seemed so joyous and gracious a heritage; the masters and the men who had the future of their businesses and their Unions to think about and so could not throw everything else aside and concentrate on making shells and guns; the young men who were doing "business as usual" and who, when the war, as they believed, was already won, did not see the necessity of joining "Kitchener's Army"; the politicians, convinced that "the public temper" would not endure even the suggestion of

conscription ; Lord Kitchener himself, despairing and bewildered by the difficulty of obtaining men and munitions, believing that "the public temper" was indeed dangerous in the extreme and *actually making ready to draft an appeal to men of 40 to come to his help*.

Mr. Lloyd George, happily, was not numbered among the "stand and wait" folk. In February 1915 he spoke out faithfully and fearlessly :

"No visitor to our shores," he declared, "would realize that we are engaged in exactly the same conflict ; and that on the stricken fields of the Continent and among the broads and narrows of the seas that encircle our islands is now being determined, not merely the fate of the British Empire, but the destiny of the human race for generations to come. We are conducting a war as if there was no war. . . . Much as I should like to talk about the need for more men, that is not the point of my special appeal to-day. We stand more in need of equipment than we do of men. This is an engineers' war and it will be won or lost owing to the efforts or shortcomings of engineers. Unless we are able to equip our armies our predominance in men will avail us nothing. We need men, but we need arms more than men, and delay in providing them is full of peril for this country."

The appeal was true in every word. Yet it failed of its purpose. The disputes and troubles continued. Five months later Mr. Lloyd George was compelled to complain :

"There is too much disposition to cling to the amenities

of peace. Business as usual, equipment as usual, fashions, lock-outs, strikes, ca' canny, spree—*all as usual*. Wages must go up, profits must also improve ; but prices must at all costs be kept down. No man must be called upon to serve the State unless he wants to ; even then he has only to be called upon to do exactly what he would like to do—not what he is fit for, not what he is chosen for, but what he, himself, would like to do. A man who could render more service by turning out munitions must be allowed to go to the front if he prefers to, and the man who would be better at the front must be allowed to stay at home if he feels more comfortable there. Freedom implies the right to shirk ! Freedom implies the right for you to enjoy and for others to defend ! Is that freedom ? ”

The speaker added in bitter tones :

“ Let Britain be beaten and discredited and dishonoured, but let no man say that any Briton, during the war, was ever forced to do anything for his country except that which was pleasing in his own sight ! ”

Lord Kitchener could not understand why his appeals to the workshops for ammunition were not more successful ; and I think that Mr. Lloyd George must have wondered why his magnificent speeches did not, at first, produce greater results. Neither of these men, nor the whole body of soldiers and statesmen who controlled our destinies, perceived what it was that was lacking to the success of their efforts and owing to the lack of which every effort failed—at least partially—of its purpose. None knew, apparently, that the driving

force of nations to-day is public opinion or that the raw material of public opinion, its essential nourishment, is *news*.

“The people perisheth because it hath no vision.”

There was only one man in Britain who knew the secret of the paralysis which lay on all men's hearts and hands. He had begged for news humbly and with great patience. He had tried, again and again, to explain the truth which rose so clear and so stark before his own eyes. Always his pleadings had been repulsed.

Northcliffe knew that the hour in which he must act had arrived.



## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

ON the morning of March 10, 1915, the Battle of Neuve Chapelle began and once again lack of high-explosive shells occasioned a terrible slaughter of the attacking forces. Sir John French renewed his fervent appeals to Lord Kitchener and also to the British Cabinet. Kitchener declared that he was doing all that was possible—which was true. The Cabinet said that “Kitchener was seeing to it.”

Despair settled on General Headquarters in France. Neuve Chapelle had proved a great disappointment. There seemed to be nothing to look forward to. Sir John French, in his extremity, turned to Northcliffe, whose newspapers suggested that he, at any rate, was alive to the seriousness of the situation. On March 27, in a statement published in *The Times*, Sir John French said :

“The protraction of the war depends entirely on the supply of men and munitions.”

This statement, like Mr. Lloyd George's speeches, caused anxiety but did not arouse the nation. Business as usual and service by standing and waiting continued as before. And then, on April 22, the Germans launched their terrible gas attack on the Canadians before Ypres. That news, at any

rate, could not be entirely suppressed, and its publication thrilled and amazed and horrified the country and the world. Was this the war which was already won? Again, at that time, I was in France and saw, for myself, some of the poor victims of the terrible chlorine gas. The thought came irresistibly that, if the eyes of Britain could see what I saw, all trouble would immediately vanish away. But we had no correspondents nearer to the front than Boulogne.

Thanks to the magnificent valour of the Canadians, a valour to which far less than justice has been done owing to the lack of news, Ypres was saved and the gas-attack discounted. Up swelled the tide of optimism at home once more. Now, cried the prophets of victory, the Germans have been fought to a standstill. Their last weapon, the poison gas, has failed. Our turn has come.

There were edifying little maps in some of the newspapers, to illustrate this thesis, and military critics explained how much the enemy had counted on "the element of surprise" in his gas attacks and how, since this element had not carried him through to Calais, he must now be plunged in despair. They hinted, too, that attacks which fail are liable to be followed by counter-attacks which succeed.

That hint revived the cheerfulness of the public amazingly. Big things, or so I was told on returning home, seemed to be in the air. The year 1914 had been Germany's year; the year 1915 would belong to the Allies. Sir John French was evidently preparing to "spring." When he sprang, the Germans, half beaten already, might even be hurled back across the Rhine. . . .

The "public temper," in short, demanded a victory, and a quick one. An attack, in the opinion of the home authorities, was called for. It was called for, too, in the opinion of the military authorities—but for reasons other than those which informed the minds of the politicians. Sir John French set his teeth and prepared, once again, to make sacrifice. But this time he determined that there should be witnesses to the inevitable. The military correspondent of *The Times*, the late Colonel Repington, was invited to visit Headquarters and see for himself the battle which was about to take place.

As it happened I saw Colonel Repington land at Boulogne and drive away to the front in a staff car. A day or two later, on May 9th of that fatal year 1915, the Battle of Festubert began after only forty minutes of artillery preparation—*the longest period which was possible with the ammunition available*. The barbed wire was not broken down. The German front-line trenches were not demolished. The German machine-gun posts were not destroyed. Against the uncut wire and the strong entrenchments and the machine-guns, our soldiers advanced in a charge compared with which the Charge of the Light Brigade was a mere promenade.

It was necessary. It was necessary for purely military reasons. Those who ordered the charge of Festubert had no option and no choice. But that fact does not lessen the pity of it.

Four days later, on May 14, *The Times* published, from its military correspondent at Headquarters in France, this statement about the Battle of Festubert :

“The want of an unlimited supply of high explosives was a fatal bar to our success.”

*The Times* declared :

“It is to this need that our military correspondent, in the message we print below, attributes largely the disappointing results of the British attacks in the districts of Fromelles and Richebourg on Sunday. By way of contrast, he records the fact that the French, in co-operation with whom we made our movement upon the German lines, fired 276 rounds of high explosives per gun in one day and levelled the enemy’s defences to the ground.”

These unequivocal statements caused a strong sensation in London and throughout the country. They were recognized as a kind of ultimatum from Sir John French to the Cabinet. But the mass of the public was not greatly affected by them. The faith of the mass of the public was given, absolutely and unconditionally, to Kitchener. “Kitchener is seeing to it.”

“If there are not enough high-explosive shells to-day,” cried the optimists, “there will be plenty of them to-morrow. Kitchener is seeing to it.”

The writers of these comfortable words would have felt less secure, perhaps, had they known that Sir John French had sent his Military Secretary to London to reinforce Colonel Repington’s message. This officer had visited Lord Balfour, Mr. Bonar Law, and Mr. Lloyd George, and told each of these statesmen exactly how matters stood. He had urged upon each of them that something, *something* must be done.

Conferences and meetings took place, and Mr. Asquith was informed of the true state of affairs. He agreed to broaden the basis of his Government by forming a Coalition Cabinet which should include Conservatives, and made an announcement to this effect in the House of Commons on May 19, five days after Colonel Repington's dispatch had appeared in *The Times*.

Optimism was immediately renewed throughout the country. The Coalition, it was said, was representative of both great parties in the state, and now the civilian side of the war would be as well managed, undoubtedly, as that military side to which Kitchener was devoting himself.

In other words Sir John French's cry of despair had failed. There was no change because public opinion had been lulled into a fresh sense of security instead of being roused to a fresh sense of danger. The mass of the British people, the New Democracy of Britain, felt quite happy about the conduct of the war.

That meant, inevitably, continuance of the old methods ; recruiting by appeal from Lord Kitchener and misuse of human material ; difficulties with employers and employed ; a smaller output of munitions than was necessary ; and the repetition of Neuve Chapelle and of Festubert. Northcliffe realized with deadly clearness that the Repington dispatch, great as had been its results, had not achieved its main purpose.

He realized, also, that that purpose must be achieved if the cause of democracy was to triumph. By some means public opinion in Britain must be awakened and instructed. The truth must be brought home to every man and every woman so that the mass-consciousness of the nation should begin to

inform the conduct of the war and to supply that irresistible driving-power without which all the efforts of commanders and statesmen are necessarily vain.

How could Britain be awakened ?

It was useless, now, to reiterate Sir John French's message. That message was already discounted. Nor would further disclosures of the same kind achieve a better result than this disclosure had achieved. They, too, would be discounted. The nation was hypnotized so that it had lost, for the moment, the power of independent judgment.

The man who had hypnotized the British nation, Northcliffe realized, was Lord Kitchener. The nation, who scarcely knew Kitchener, had made an idol of him, ascribing to him infallible wisdom and infallible power. "*Kitchener is seeing to it,*" was the unfailing comfort in every emergency—a kind of charm which, with mysterious potency, allayed all doubt and quieted all fears. Not only had Kitchener withheld news of the war from the public ; he had actually, by the mesmerism of his name and reputation, rendered the public incapable of hearing the news.

The truth, then, about Kitchener must be told before the truth about anything else could be told. The British nation must hear what, in secret, its chief statesmen were whispering to each other.

Well may Northcliffe have recoiled from the conclusion to which his reason and his knowledge inevitably brought him ! To tell the truth about Kitchener—that he had allowed himself to be misled by the politicians ; that he had failed to take steps which his own inclinations dictated because he was apprehensive of the "temper of the public" ;

that he was already bowed down under a burden too heavy for any man's shoulders; that he had not succeeded in making the provision for the armies which was vital to ultimate triumph—that was an enterprise on which the boldest dared not embark. Men who lacked nothing of courage, shrank from that enterprise in the belief that, if the public lost its faith in Kitchener, the national effort must inevitably break down.

“It is Kitchener,” they said, “or ruin.”

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### A VERY GREAT MAN

**N**ORTHCLIFFE did not believe that it was "Kitchener or ruin." He believed, on the contrary, that the British people were able to hear the truth, all the grim truth, about the war and that, once they had heard the truth, their spirits would be quickened and their hearts steelled.

Northcliffe believed, that is to say, in the people: he trusted the people as no politician trusted them. The New Democracy, in his view, was high of courage and strong of soul: in his view Britain was failing only because that high courage and that strength of soul had not been enlisted in her cause.

And so this man, whom his enemies have so often represented as a mere panderer to the million, resolved with his own hands to tear away the veil from the face of Kitchener, the idol of the people.

When he announced his resolution, some of his own lieutenants were filled with anxiety. They also believed that it was "Kitchener or ruin," though they had no illusions about the seriousness of the position. They pointed out, too, that any attack on Kitchener might be followed by a fierce outburst of popular indignation against the attacker. The Northcliffe Press would be looked upon as the enemy of



the country and would probably, nay, almost certainly be ruined.

"*What does that matter,*" said Northcliffe, "*if we win the war ?*"

On May 21, six days after the publication of the Repington dispatch, Northcliffe wrote a leading article for the *Daily Mail* which was headed :

### "THE TRAGEDY OF THE SHELLS

#### "LORD KITCHENER'S GRAVE ERROR

"Lord Kitchener," said Northcliffe, "has starved the army in France of high-explosive shells. . . .

"The admitted fact is that Lord Kitchener *ordered the wrong kind of shell*—the same kind of shell which he used largely against the Boers in 1900. He persisted in sending shrapnel—a useless weapon in trench warfare. He was warned repeatedly that the kind of shell required was a violently explosive bomb which would dynamite its way through the German trenches and entanglements and enable our brave men to advance in safety.

"The kind of shell our poor soldiers have had has caused the death of thousands of them. Incidentally it has brought about a Cabinet crisis and the formation of what we hope is going to be a National Government."

Northcliffe then paid a tribute to Kitchener's success in recruiting a large army but declared that the *Daily Mail* would not print any further War Office advertisements urging the enlistment of men of forty, most of whom would be married, while :

"Some thousands of capable young slackers are staying at home and stealing the business of married men who have gone to the front."

Such a state of affairs, said Northcliffe, "is no testimony to Lord Kitchener's organizing ability."

Finally Northcliffe dealt with the suggestion, then being widely canvassed, that Lord Kitchener should go to the front as Commander-in-Chief in succession to Sir John French:

"It has never been pretended," he wrote, "that Lord Kitchener is a soldier in the sense that Sir John French is a soldier. His record in the South African War as a fighting General—apart from his excellent organizing work as Chief of the Staff—was not brilliant. The opinion which Lord Roberts expressed as to his handling of troops at Paardeberg is well known, and we have never met a soldier who held any other opinion. Nothing in Lord Kitchener's experience suggests that he has the qualifications required for conducting a European campaign in the field, and we can only hope that no such misfortune will befall this nation as that he should be permitted to interfere with the actual strategy of this gigantic war. If by any chance Lord Kitchener went to France to conduct the campaign, we should probably have a costly object-lesson in the difference between African and European warfare."

The iconoclast had spared nothing to make his work complete. The whole truth, as he knew it, the bare, raw truth, had been told—the truth about the battles in France;

the truth about the Cabinet crisis ; the truth about the recruiting muddle ; the truth about the shells—and *overshadowing all these truths, the truth about Kitchener himself.*

It was a merciless exposure ; and, in view of all that Kitchener had done, it seemed, at first sight, to touch the high-water mark of ingratitude. Nobody unaware of the facts could possibly read it without resentment. But after resentment, inevitably, there must come a shadow of doubting. . . .

It was unkind to Kitchener. But what, after all, was Kitchener as compared with England ? As Northcliffe wrote he heard the rush of feet towards the uncut wire at Neuve Chapelle and at Festubert ; saw the faces of brave men set in the awful determination of those who go out to meet death in the way ; heard the agony of the fallen. It was unkind to Kitchener ; but Kitchener was one man, whereas a nation, Humanity itself, stood in jeopardy because of the idolatry which surrounded Kitchener. There was no other way than this way of ruthless attack and merciless exposure.

*“What does it matter, if we win the war ?”*

Northcliffe is a stern figure at this supreme moment of his life. Yet I confess that I have lingered long contemplating his ruthlessness. I confess that, at this supreme moment of his life, he seems to me to be, also, a very great figure. All that he has, all that he has created in the strenuous years are thrown on this die : wealth, reputation, power, perhaps even his personal safety. These things are nothing. But the danger that, with the fall of its idol, the people may lose heart or courage, cannot be dismissed so easily. That danger, in spite of his faith in England, dwells, without

doubt, in his spirit. For that which he does now, no man can, at any time, undo.

Mark him well, then, as the last proofs of his article pass from his hands. To-morrow the four corners of the world will echo this challenge ; his fellow-countrymen, to-morrow, will know no other news. On the morrow the execration of England, and all her sister states, will be poured out against him. That much, at least, is sure. . . .

He rises from his writing and goes out into the great city which he has known and understood so well, London which, always, has taken him to her heart. I do not think that it is of to-morrow that he is fearful, but of the days which lie beyond that first day of awakening.

For he has staked his own faith in the strength and wisdom of the English folk against the considered opinion of almost every leader and every statesman and every Pressman in the land.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE HURRICANE

THE storm, in a few hours, became a hurricane. "Never," cried millions of voices on the morning of May 21, "has fouler blow been struck than this blow of Northcliffe's against Kitchener."

From anger the worshippers of Kitchener passed swiftly to action. The *Daily Mail*, and *The Times* also, were publicly burned, that day, on the London Stock Exchange and elsewhere. Men stamped on them; men spat upon them. Thousands of resolutions were passed in thousands of exchanges and markets throughout the country expressing complete confidence in Lord Kitchener and utter detestation of the "venomous attack" which had been made on him. Good citizens took solemn pledges never again to read any of the Northcliffe papers and never again to advertise their wares in them, and the Government was called upon to arrest Northcliffe himself as a traitor, send him to the Tower and shoot him out of hand. Threatening letters poured into the *Daily Mail* office in Carmelite House and strong efforts were made to collect mobs to sack the office. On the plate of the City office of the *Daily Mail* in Throgmorton Street a placard was posted bearing the words: "The Allies of the Huns." At the Baltic Exchange the members passed a resolution condemning the attack on Lord Kitchener. The

newspapers which were opposed to conscription howled with rage.

As a result 100,000 readers of the *Daily Mail* left it and large numbers of advertisers withdrew their announcements.

"He" (Northcliffe), cried a morning paper on May 22, "is no longer a jest; he is the most deadly enemy that this country or this Empire has to face. He is ready to set either in a blaze to light a placard.

"Do not let us misunderstand the position. The man is nothing. He has neither intellect nor purpose; nothing but an idle passion to be mischievous and masterful. The source of his power is not in himself or in anything that he has done. It is in the possession of an unexampled vehicle of influence. He is great, as the German Emperor is great, because of the machine he controls. Take him away from that machine and he is as negligible as an office-boy. But with the machine he is as dangerous as if that office-boy were in control of a Dreadnought. The scene on the Stock Exchange yesterday is the first clear hint that the peril is fully understood."

It was; but not in the sense in which the paper used the words. Those burnings of his newspapers, those howls of execration, those threats of violence, those withdrawn subscriptions and advertisements filled Northcliffe with infinite relief and thankfulness. England was aroused at last; north, south, east, and west, men were talking about the war and about Kitchener's share in the war; about Sir John

French's plea for high-explosive shells and about the formation of the Coalition Government which had followed that plea; about the appeal by Kitchener to the men of forty and the "young slackers" who had not yet joined up. About the failure of Festubert and the possible need for conscription. For the first time since August 1914 public opinion was in process of formation on the subject of the national danger.

Those brave eyes which had seen their hateful duty so clearly the day before, saw now, already, the rich rewards of the performance of that duty. While other men spoke tremblingly of ruin, of falling circulations and tottering finances, he could scarcely contain his joy.

"Go on with the campaign," were the orders which he gave.

And so, on the next day and on the days which followed, the newspaper that men had expected to see cowering abashed before the hurricane of popular rage, boldly repeated its offence.

"A tragic blunder" and "grave negligence" were among the stern phrases made use of, and the *Daily Mail* very much doubted:

"Whether there is a single Front Bench man on either side of the House who is prepared to join the Coalition Ministry except on the express condition that Lord Kitchener no longer holds the absolute power which has placed the army in its present predicament."

The *Daily Mail*, further, declared it to be a matter of urgent necessity that "the industrial business of organizing

the production of munitions " should be separated " from the military business of raising and training troops."

" There is something wrong with the war, and the public ought to know it."

This insistence was not less necessary than had been the original attack. Had the *Daily Mail* showed the least sign of fear in face of its accusers, its influence must have perished on the instant. Its fearlessness, and its reiteration of its statements about Kitchener, made the public, cooling a little from its first anger, begin to doubt.

" Nothing," wrote Mr. Sydney Brooks in the *North American Review* on August 1915, " can disguise the fact that Lord Northcliffe was the first man with knowledge and courage enough to lay bare the shortage of shells and machine guns, which, so long as it lasts, must pile up the casualty lists and operate as a fatal barrier to any sustained advance. Nobody, again, who knows him, can doubt that, in acting as he did, he was impelled solely by public motives. Nor, I think, can anyone question that the net result has been highly advantageous to everybody except Lord Northcliffe, that the country at last realizes the truth which official assurances had obscured or perverted, and that it was only by painting the situation in its real colours that the British people could be stirred to the gigantic efforts necessary to retrieve it.

" It was the question of the shells far more than anything else that brought down the Liberal Government and led to the Coalition Ministry, the division in the powers of the War Office and the appointment of Mr. Lloyd George as Minister



of Munitions. These developments may have been discussed and meditated even before Lord Northcliffe started on his campaign. But his journals, and his alone, made them inevitable; and it is merely a question of time before the value of the national service that they thus rendered is ungrudgingly recognized."

This testimony came from an outsider who did not wholly approve of the personal attack on Kitchener.

Five days after Northcliffe's campaign against Kitchener began the Ministry of Munitions was created (May 26, 1915), and Mr. Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, left that great office to become the first Minister of Munitions.

A week later, on June 3, Mr. Lloyd George visited Lancashire and, at Manchester, delivered "An Appeal to the Workshops."

"It depends more," he cried, "upon the masters and men who are occupied in running the workshops of this country, than upon almost any section of the community, whether Britain will emerge from this colossal struggle beaten, humiliated, stripped of power and honour and influence, the mere bond-slave of a cruel military tyranny, or whether she will come out triumphant. . . ."

The new Minister of Munitions then referred to the Russian defeat in Galicia, which was brought about by German gun-power, and continued:

"Had we been in a position to apply the same process to the Germans on our front" (at Festubert), "broken their

lines, driven them back the same number of miles as they have driven back the Russians in Galicia, what would have happened? They would have been turned out of France, they would have been driven half-way across the devastated plain of Flanders. They would have been well out of the country they had tortured and tormented with a dastardly cruelty. More than that; we should have actually penetrated into Germany and we could have seen clearly in front of us the end of this terrible war. . . .”

“The Truth will out,” had been the slogan of the *Daily Mail* since the campaign began. “The Truth *is* out,” was now its cry.

On June 11, a fortnight after the attack on Kitchener, Mr. Lloyd George declared at Cardiff, in another “Appeal to the Workshops”:

“We are—I hardly like to use the words—we are short of shell. We want it, we must get it, and you can give it.”

These speeches fell no longer in the stony ground of national ignorance; they rang in ears which were strained to catch every syllable.

“Can it be true then,” men asked one another in accents of amazement and deep anxiety, “that Kitchener is not the god we supposed him to be? In that case . . .”

Faces grew stern. The men of Britain and the women of Britain spoke no more about “Business as usual.” Nor did the thought, “Kitchener is seeing to it,” afford them comfort as in the days before the great awakening.

Northcliffe, even before Mr. Lloyd George had spoken, had telegraphed to the *Public Ledger* in America, in response to a request for a statement :

“ My newspapers are telling unpleasant truths which some of the public, after nine months of concealment, resent ; but I have an immense and growing body of public opinion on my side.”

## CHAPTER XL

### THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

YET the men and women of Britain still lacked real news of the war. They were learning from Northcliffe and Mr. Lloyd George how great was the need of action, but the stimulus of actual human news was wanting to their minds. So late as October 1915, when a new crisis occurred in the Government, Northcliffe telegraphed to the *New York World*:

“The really serious aspect of the affairs here is that, owing to the censorship, this democracy knows practically nothing about the course of its own war. Many people here are buying American newspapers to read the war news.

“As soon as our people learn the facts, I am convinced they will demand some such drastic change of Government here as I have outlined above.”

The change to which Northcliffe referred was “a Government by a small committee” instead of a huge Cabinet of 22 members.

The Man of the *Daily Mail* knew now, in the autumn of 1915, that he had not been mistaken and that he had not misjudged the New Democracy of Britain. It was able to bear the truth. And the truth, far from affrighting or dis-

heartening it, had saved it. Mr. Lloyd George's efforts, backed by a growing public opinion, were securing industrial co-operation and "getting the shells." No one, any longer, feared "the temper of the people"; on the contrary everyone had begun to appeal to that temper.

But public opinion remained uninstructed. Our folk did not know, even yet, that a War Council, to bend all the activities of Government to the work of winning the war, was essential, nor did they realize the immense need for conscription, both industrial and military. Northcliffe saw that a National dedication to the one supreme task of victory was indispensable. He knew that the nation was now ready and eager to dedicate itself. But he knew, also, that the opposition to this heroic measure was so great that it could be overcome only by a vast, overwhelming and irresistible manifestation of public opinion. He set himself to secure such a manifestation and he had Mr. Lloyd George, now, as his strong ally in this effort.

"If," wrote the Minister of Munitions, "we are not allowed to equip our factories and workshops with adequate labour to supply our armies, because we must not transgress regulations applicable to normal conditions; if practices are maintained which restrict the output of essential war material; if the nation hesitates, when the need is clear, to take the necessary steps to call out its manhood to defend honour and existence; if vital decisions are postponed until too late; if we neglect to make ready for all probable eventualities; if, in fact, we give ground for the accusation that we are sloughing into disaster as if we were walking along the ordinary paths

of peace without an enemy in sight, then I can see no hope ; but if we sacrifice all we own and all we like for our native land, if our preparations are characterized by grip, resolution and a prompt readiness in every sphere, the victory is assured."

Northcliffe could not persuade the authorities to appoint war correspondents. He could, however, go out himself to the war (as the guest of the Belgians and the French and the Italians and of Sir John French) and himself tell the story which other pens were forbidden to tell. So soon as his work in London was complete and the public confidence in the faithfulness of the Northcliffe Press had been restored, the man who believed that only by news could his country be saved went out to "get the news." Not only so, but the news which he got was offered, in many instances, *not only to his own newspapers, but to every newspaper in the country and the world.*

The effect of the articles which this great journalist wrote was overwhelming, as he had foreseen that it must be overwhelming. Northcliffe, however, was not content with his own efforts. He sent emissaries into Germany to bring back news of the enemy—real, human news—and he pressed the authorities so hard and so insistently that, at last, war correspondents were accepted at the British General Headquarters. From that hour the ablest descriptive writers in England enabled the public, day after day, to take a human and vital interest in the immense drama.

Public opinion was informed at long last. It is a matter of history that, within a few brief months, the small War

Council, which Northcliffe had suggested, was formed and the conscription of the whole manhood of the nation for which he had pleaded so long was resolved upon.

The British people had not disappointed the man who trusted them and believed in them and whose "panderings" to their "lowest instincts" (in the words of his enemies) consisted in a daily and hourly insistence that they should leave all and give themselves and their sons to the duty of defending their country no matter at what cost.

Northcliffe's task among his fellow-countrymen was nearly accomplished.

## CHAPTER XLI

“HANG NORTHCLIFFE !”

NORTHCLIFFE as a war correspondent won the hearts of many of those who had most fiercely assailed him but who, later on, had come to realize the wisdom and the honesty of the man. I think, personally, that his articles from the various fronts afford a singularly true and clear picture of his mind.

When, for example, he had obtained an insight into the immense services which women were rendering behind the lines in France and also at home in munition factories, he experienced a sense of delight and wrote :

“Every woman so engaged is showing the world the real capacity of her sex for many kinds of labour, and is also helping the country to progress towards a much-desired goal ; the more equal distribution of money among the people. Before the war, in dreary, manless suburbs and provincial towns, thousands of nice girls whose families thought it beneath their dignity that they should work, preferred the boresome existence of keeping up appearances on small dress allowances to an active participation in daily life. Since the war these young women have entered into the battle of industrial work with joyousness and, though the absence of the best in the land in the war zone is unhappily



delaying the marriage to which every patriotic woman looks forward, they have the great satisfaction of knowing that, whether they be women doctors, women dentists, women clerks, women ticket collectors, or engaged in any other profession, they are helping the great cause of Freedom."

Again :

"I remember well the first time that I saw a cannon fired in war. I did so with reluctance, not wishing to participate, even by observation, in the sending forth of that which would destroy life or wound. . . . One's first impression of war is chaos and confusion and the immensity of it all. . . . My own personal feeling was one of regret that I was not able to do something to help in what was going on. . . . It is a grave reflection on the deeds of British or French soldiers to say that the Germans are not brave. They *are* brave, but in a different way from our kind of bravery. . . . *Everyone of my readers should carefully think over and discuss the future of the British Islands and the British Empire in view of the developments of war in the air.* . . . I am of the opinion that as much leave as possible should be given to the men and more to officers—and especially to officers of the higher command. . . . A tired man is of no use in war or any other worldly affair."

During his visit to the Somme front Northcliffe saw an advanced dressing station near Péronne.

"In all my many experiences abroad," he wrote, "I have never seen a more touching sight than this little underground gathering of some seventy men, devoted doctors and assistants,

waiting amidst the incessant shelling until the overcrowded maze could be evacuated. Let those who take their ease on a Sunday afternoon, or any other afternoon, realize that the same scene never ceases. Let those who consider that they are amply doing their ‘ bit ’ by keeping things going at home be grateful that their ‘ bit ’ is not as that of these young men. We cannot, all of us, share the dangers, but we can, every one of us, admit the harsh inequalities of our respective war work.”

The talk of the soldiers interested Northcliffe profoundly, and he records much of it, adding :

“ As I watched the swift (hospital) ship and saw her speeding away to England at well over twenty knots, I wondered if people and politicians at home are beginning to understand that the bravery and *camaraderie* of the officers and men in the field have broken down all class feeling ; and that our millions of men abroad are changed communities of whose thoughts and aims we know but little. . . . Just as Grant’s soldiers, the Grand Army of the Republic, dominated the elections in the United States for a quarter of a century, so will the men I have seen in the trenches and the ambulances come home and demand by their votes the reward of a very changed England—an England they will fashion and share ; an England that is likely to be as much a surprise to the present owners of Capital and leaders of Labour as it may be to the owners of the land.”

Northcliffe always disclaimed the power of a prophet and used to warn his editors against indulging in prophecy.

Yet I think that the prophet's power was his in some measure. He foresaw a better world "after the war" because, as he wrote :

"In these great days the breath of war is the breath of life, and the spirit of sacrifice is the spirit of regeneration."

The allied armies seemed to Northcliffe to be a company of very gallant gentlemen, co-operating for a very noble purpose. He saw these gentlemen—so brave, so patient, so unselfish—as the salt of the earth and could not, for a moment, suppose that this salt would ever lose its savour. Hence he foresaw a world remade nearer to the heart's desire, a kinder world, a truer world, a more Christian world. I think that, already, there are signs that what he foresaw will indeed come to pass.

Let it not be supposed, however, that this man had any faith in that kind of "reform" which is accomplished merely by Act of Parliament. Northcliffe distrusted abstractions and most of all, perhaps, that abstraction which is called "the State." He never, at any time, made use of that word of cold and ungenerous omen, but spoke of the "Mother-Country" and of her "sons." His whole conception of democracy was "sonship," that is most willing service rendered to a most loving parent. In his view men could not do enough for their dear mother and would be less than filial—less than gentle—if they looked to that mother solely for gifts.

He felt too that it was the privilege as well as the duty of a son to help his brothers and sisters and this was, throughout his life, his attitude to all social reform work. Help, in his

view, meant not so much the giving of charity as the affording of opportunity of usefulness. The “ gentlemen all,” who were his fellow-countrymen, would, he believed, rebuild this Britain on the lines of “ sonship ” . . . that elusive yet splendid middle-course between the extremes of commercial exploitation of human happiness and of socialistic pandering to human ineptitude. The gentlemen of England would know how to compete, how to quit them like men and be strong ; but they would know also, in peace as well as in war, how to lend their manhood to the oppressed and their strength to the helpless. Those who accused Northcliffe of “ Prussianism ” because he advocated conscription wholly misunderstood his motives. Conscription, as he frequently said, was more often needed to keep Britons from going to the front than to send them there. It was merely the essential basis of the organization of the whole people. Prussianism commands men whether they will or not. Northcliffe asked only that Britons should be told the truth in such a way that they could understand and appreciate it. He knew that, when this had been done, all the true sons, and all the true daughters too, would rush to the help of their motherland, and with their own consent, be laid under discipline and servitude.

And so it happened.

Nor was his vision confined to Britain herself. It extended to the four corners of the Empire.

“ To those of us,” he wrote in the *Daily Mail* early in 1916, “ who have lost kinsmen in the war it is some consolation to know that this upheaval of the world is bringing about

a closer cohesion of the Five Nations that make the Empire. How glorious it is to feel that one's high expectations of the men from the Far East and the Far South have been more than realized. . . .

"The coming of all these young men from the far corners of the earth is greatly beneficial to us at home. They bring new ideas, new vigour and outspokenness and freedom that will help us to shake off the shackles of conventionality born of a residence of a thousand years or more in our island.

"They also learn. I have been much with Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans of late. The voyage home across oceans from which the enemy's ships have been swept has borne in upon them a sense of the mighty power of that Empire of which they are so important a part. . . .

"The horrible aspects of this war, its drab carnage, its remorseless waste of youth, sadden our minds so often that it is well to remember that the catastrophe is not without some compensation. Not the least of these is the bringing together of millions of English-speaking men who would never otherwise have met. Having met, they are preparing a bond of affection, commerce and naval and military preparedness, that will keep the British Empire as paramount for justice after, as it was before, the war.

"Out of the world chaos will emerge an even more glorious assemblage of Free British Nations."

In December of the same year Northcliffe broadcasted to all the newspapers of the world an article entitled :

“ FASHIONING THE NEW ENGLAND,”

in which he expressed his satisfaction that “the burden of taxation has been increased on the shoulders best able to bear it—the very rich,” and that “Labour is taking its proper place in Government counsels. Workers are being better remunerated.”

In the same article Northcliffe paid a tribute to Mr. Lloyd George in which he recalled the opposition of that statesman to the Boer War, adding :

“ However wrong, it was a brave attitude, for it demanded more courage to be on the side of the minority who opposed the (Boer) war than to shout with the majority who supported it.”

Northcliffe loved courage because he possessed it in full measure. His visit to the terrific battle of Verdun at the very height of that battle and his prolonged tour of the Italian front did not strike this man of fifty-two as brave, so intent was he on learning the truth and telling it to the whole world ; yet brave they certainly were. Courage had its full reward. Northcliffe, in his own person and with his own pen, achieved more, as a war correspondent, than any other journalist who wrote about the war. His dispatches were published in every civilized country and in most languages—for he gave them freely to the world, and his book, *At the War*, found hundreds of thousands of readers. Book and dispatches served to mould world-opinion in favour of the Allies and to awaken in men’s minds the grand conception of a Brotherhood of Democracy and a Sonship of Freedom.

The lad who so long before had dreamed his dreams in the green Hampstead lanes had become indeed a world figure, one of the greatest of the champions of humanity against those who denied the brotherhood of man.

The Germans knew it, and were afraid.

"Always, always," wrote Herr Georg Blum in the *Tägliche Rundschau*, "people overlook what this man has done in these last years to render his future more glorious. . . . It was the Northcliffe Press which most effectively worked for national service. Lord Northcliffe recently made a journey, as is well known, to Switzerland and Spain for the purpose of buying up or influencing Swiss and Spanish newspapers and of abusing the Germans in Spain in the fiercest manner."

The German-Americans were even more furious. Dr. Karl Bertling suggested, according to the *New York Sun*, "the hanging of Lord Northcliffe, the English newspaper owner, as a remedy for anti-German sentiment in this country."

## CHAPTER XLII

### “ CHUMS ”

**N**ORTHCLIFFE, as the Germans well knew, understood America better than any other living Englishman.

He understood America because he loved her and admired her and shared her great spirit. The Brotherhood of Humanity and the Sonship of Freedom have been the ideals of the American people since the American people achieved independent existence by casting off the fetters of an England as yet unreleased from feudalism.

As early as the Battle of the Marne Northcliffe had met Americans who had volunteered to serve in the Allied Armies. By 1917 when America came into the war, the forces of democracy were well aware of the heroism and courage of the citizens of the United States.

“ If you take a map of the United States,” wrote Northcliffe, “ and go up and down the American lines in France, you will find no city, great or small, which has not sent a flying man, a bomber, an artillery man, a sniper or dispatch rider to help to destroy Prussian despotism.”

“ The great fact,” he declared in a speech at the same period, “ is that more than 50,000 young Crusaders have crossed the Atlantic to join an army in which they are not



fighting for King and Country but against what they realize to be the curse of the world at this moment."

Northcliffe, I know, regarded the entry of the United States into the war against Germany as the greatest event in the history of democracy since the French Revolution. He saw in it, I think, a new kind of alliance founded not upon national friendship but on the friendship of one free man for another irrespective of nationality—a brotherhood and a sonship which must remain the chief factor in international politics. America and France and England may quarrel with one another; but those Americans and Frenchmen and Englishmen who are conscious of the same ideals and the same spirit of manly independence cannot but remain friends. And their friendship will save the world.

That faith burned strong in Northcliffe's heart when he set sail in June 1917 to become the head of the American War Mission in place of Lord Balfour. Northcliffe went forth now as a missionary of the future, just as, in England, he had gone forth as a missionary of the immediate present.

He was well fitted for his enterprise :

"I think," wrote a distinguished American some time afterwards, "that it is a saying of his (Northcliffe's) that there are only fifteen Englishmen who know America. I am tempted to use the point of a well-known story and say that Lord Northcliffe is fourteen of them : who is the other one ? His knowledge of America in gross and detail is most extraordinary. . . . He does not represent the British Government but rather the British people."

"No living Englishman," said Mr. Marcossou, the dis-

tinguished American journalist, “understands us so well; none is so welcome.”

Northcliffe lost not a moment in urging on America that she should not repeat the blunder of England in the matter of not trusting her people and not telling them the truth.

“I hope,” he cried, “that America may permit her newspapers and magazine writers to be absolutely frank about what is going on. It is as important for the nation to know the worst as it is for the nation to know the best. . . . Democracies are entitled to the fullest news of their soldiers and sailors.

“The war correspondent is no longer regarded as a nuisance, as in the early days of the struggle. He is looked upon as a valuable ally and is trusted by the British and French armies. We have found that the more news the fewer ugly rumours.

“Press comment is invaluable to democratic Governments. The newspaper focusses the ideas and suggestions of millions of watchful minds and it often affords valuable pointers to Government Departments. Its criticisms suggest and stimulate. The recent struggle for the re-establishment of a free Press in Great Britain has restored the liberty of expression to patriotic writers. The systematic publication of news, good or bad, is the means of giving confidence to the Governments of democracies.”

The words were spoken with intense earnestness for, once again, Northcliffe saw that the British Government was doing itself great injury by withholding the truth. In this case

it was the truth about the submarine campaign which was being hidden—with the result that the American people did not realize the immense need which existed for new ships to replace those lost as a result of submarine attack.

Northcliffe resolved to tell the truth no matter what the authorities at home might say—for he was satisfied that that truth was already well known to the Germans. He explained to his American audiences that the U-boat campaign had been much more successful than the published figures revealed and begged these audiences to realize that the greatest boon America could confer on the allies was ships.

“Build ships, more ships, and still more ships,” was his constantly repeated advice.

Once again the miracle happened. The truth informed public opinion and the gentlemen of the American democracy, like the gentlemen of the English democracy, girded their loins to face the difficulty and overcome it. Once again Northcliffe’s simple, strong faith in his fellow-men, in *Man* free and independent, was justified to the fullest possible degree.

I would urge my reader to dwell on this episode—so full of advantage to the allied cause, so characteristic of Northcliffe. And I would urge, also, that the following words of Mr. Max Pemberton should be set side by side with it :

“A Boy’s Camp was founded by Lord Northcliffe upon the cliffs by the North Foreland, and he asked for Father Dolling to supervise it. There, every year, some hundreds of youngsters lived in tents and breathed that glorious air. We can imagine what this meant to the children of the city, some

of whom had never seen a green field in all their lives. The youngsters were upon the sands or in the sea the best part of the day. But in the afternoon there were games and races and these very frequently would be witnessed by Lord Northcliffe and his guests. If not the beginning of the great charity of Boys' Camps throughout the country, these ventures were at least the work of early pioneers."

It may seem "a far cry" from the Boys' Camp on the North Foreland to the American Mission and Northcliffe's plain-spoken appeal for ships. But the "cry" is not so "far" when we look at Northcliffe himself. The secret of this man's power lay in the fact that he loved his fellows, believed the very best of them as individual men and counted it his greatest privilege to serve them. And just as he believed in the tonic of sunshine and fresh air for the lads of the London slums, so he believed in the sunshine of truth, "the honest news" as he called it, for the great democracies of America and England.

America, as I have said, responded to his sincerity and his faith.

"His generous words," said the *Evening Sun* of November 17, 1917, "ring with the note of sincerity and goodwill. Indeed we know his character well enough to feel sure that he would not have uttered such sweeping praise if he did not mean it. All Americans must feel proud of having won such recognition from an outside observer of such intelligence, uncompromising frankness and complete independence."

But if America responded to Northcliffe, Northcliffe much more responded to America. As always, that land

filled him with strange exaltation and excitement and quickened his strong spirit. It was in America, I think, that the vision of the New World, which had so long haunted his mind, was clearly given to him. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that his work for humanity on the other side of the Atlantic wrought a great evolution in Northcliffe's own soul. I think that, when he came back to Europe, to receive the thanks of his King and his fellow-countrymen on the immense success of his labours, he had grown in spiritual stature. I find evidence of this—apart from my personal knowledge of him—in much that he said and wrote, and perhaps most of all in his address to the New York Branch of the Overseas Club :

“Live the ideal of the British Empire,” he urged the members of that branch. “What a man does counts infinitely more than what he says. It is the duty of every member of the Overseas Club to show by his actions in the United States what the British Empire stands for. We have over 400 branches of the Club on this side of the Atlantic ; I want to see these branches working with all their might towards winning the war and the establishment of lasting goodwill amongst nations based on high ideals, *motives of brotherhood—the real democracy.*”

Northcliffe founded the Overseas Club and said that he took more pride in this achievement than in any other of his past activities. While in America he began to see the harvest which he had sown. He began to see that if men knew and honoured and understood and loved one another nations also must become friends. The League of Nations always

had this great man's support ; but I think that, in his heart, he believed most of all in a “ League of Brothers ” as the foundation of world peace. Northcliffe could never lose sight of the *individual* man, nor ever forget that leagues and classes and nations too are made up of individual men and individual women. His outlook from first to last was human and personal.

“ Let this Fourth of July,” he wrote in a message to American boys, “ have a new significance to you—let it mean more than ever before. Let it impress on you that the American boy and the British boy will stand together for all time in a common bond—‘ Chums ’ and faithful companions against the foes of right and liberty.”

There indeed spoke Northcliffe, the man who had looked upon all Britain, men, women, and children, year in and year out, for a quarter of a century, as his “ chums,” and who, from the beginning, had proved himself to his “ chums ” a friend worth having, fearless and kind and considerate and true.

“ He is the creator of modern England,” said the Rev. W. E. Bentley in New York, “ and we can see the results of his work on every hand.”

## CHAPTER XLIII

“TOO BAD ! ”

ON his return to England, Northcliffe was invited by Mr. Lloyd George to become the first Air Minister. He wrote in reply :

*November 15, 1917.*

“DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

I have given anxious consideration to your repeated invitation that I should take charge of the new Air Ministry. The reasons which have impelled me to decline that great honour and responsibility are in no way concerned with the office which is rightly to be set up. They are roughly as follows :

“Returning after five months spent in the virile atmosphere of the United States and Canada I find that, while these two countries are proceeding with their war preparations with a fervour and enthusiasm little understood on this side of the Atlantic ; while the United States has instantly put into operation conscription, over which we wobbled for two years, and is making short work with sedition-mongers ; while Canada has already given such proofs of thoroughness as the disenfranchisement of conscientious objectors and the denaturalization of all enemy aliens who have been naturalized in the last fifteen years ; while we, for our part, are asking

immense sacrifices from these people—there are still in office here those who dally with such urgent questions as that of the unity of war control, the eradication of sedition, the mobilization of the whole man and woman power of the country and the introduction of compulsory food rations. I have had personal experience myself, while in America, of the obstruction and delay in certain Departments in London, which, for example, postponed the sending of Lord Reading's vital and most successful mission. I find that the Censorship is still being misused and that men in various positions of authority, who should have been punished, have been retained and, in some cases, elevated.

"The spirit of the men and women of Great Britain is clearly as eager and as splendid as ever. We have, in my belief, the most efficient army in the world, led by one of the greatest generals, and I am well aware of the fine achievements of many others of our soldiers, sailors and statesmen; but I feel that, in present circumstances, I can do better work if I maintain my independence and am not gagged by a loyalty that I do not feel towards the whole of your Administration.

"I take this opportunity of thanking you and the War Cabinet for the handsome message of praise sent to me as representing the five hundred officials of the British War Mission in the United States, many of them volunteer exiles. Their achievements and those of their ten thousand assistants deserve to be better known by their countrymen. The fact that their work is not known is due to the absurd secrecy about the war which is still prevalent. Everything that these officials is doing is known to our American friends, and, of course, to the Germans. I trust I make no breach of



confidence in saying that some of the documents which have passed through my hands as Head of the Mission are such as, if published, would greatly increase our prestige in the United States and hearten our people at home.

"May I also take this opportunity of giving a warning about our relations with that great people from whom I have come? We have had the tragedy of Russia" (the Bolsheviks) "due partly to lack of Allied propaganda to contradict that of the Germans. We have had the tragedy of Italy" (the defeat of the Italian Army at Caporetto late in 1917) "largely due to that same enemy propaganda. We have had the tragedies of Serbia, Roumania and Montenegro. There is one tragedy which I am sure we shall not have, and that is the tragedy of the United States. But, from countless conversations with leading Americans, I know that, unless there is swift improvement in our methods here, the United States will rightly take into its own hands the entire management of a great part of the war. It will not sacrifice its blood and treasure to incompetent handling of affairs in Europe.

"In saying all this, which is very much on my mind, believe me that I have none but the most friendly feelings towards yourself and that I am greatly honoured by your suggestion.

"Yours sincerely,

"NORTHCLIFFE."

This letter aroused the usual indignation in high places and among Northcliffe's enemies. It caused, on the other hand, considerable uneasiness among the public as a whole. What, it was asked, is going on this time behind our backs?

There was much going on—quite enough to make the stoutest heart uneasy. Russia was out of the war and the Germans were hurrying their huge Eastern army to the Western Front. Italy had been severely handled and was still reeling under the blows she had received. The war in the Balkans and in the Near East was not going well. The submarine campaign had succeeded far better than was known and food in England was running short. Worst of all, France had come within sight of the end, not of her courage and heroism, but of her resources in men and materials. In the opinion of many instructed persons, unity of command on the Western Front was essential.

For it was certain that, as soon as the spring of the year 1918 arrived—that is, in four, or at most five, months, the Germans would launch a last mighty offensive in the hope of breaking through the Allied army and reaching the coast. Success in that enterprise would mean, almost certainly, a quick peace (and a peace on favourable terms) before America should be able to develop her power.

The situation, in fact, was desperate, and demanded desperate remedies. Northcliffe realized that, once again, he must set the facts before his fellow-countrymen. He could not do this if he joined the Government.

"My direct and indirect connexion with the Government," he declared publicly, "convinces me that it needs wholesale revision."

He set to work to secure this revision and the other reforms which he believed to be so desperately necessary,

using, as ever, his mighty weapon of News. And in course of time, after fierce campaigning, all the reforms which he advocated were granted. The fearful disasters of the early months of 1918 were followed by the calling of Marshal Foch to the supreme command—the course Northcliffe had urged six months earlier. Food too was rationed—and our country, thus, saved from starvation. And the whole manhood and womanhood of Britain was mobilized.

It was at this time that I saw Northcliffe as I have already recounted at the beginning of this book. I remember that, as we drove one day together, through the war-time streets of London, he said to me in anxious tones :

“If we do not take precautions in time, 1918 will be a year of dreadful losses. As at Gallipoli, the want of foresight will be visited on these glorious soldiers of ours. It is too bad.”

I knew of what he was thinking, for I had learned, though not from himself, the details of the decisive part which he had played in persuading the Government and the War Office to evacuate Gallipoli and bring that splendid failure to an end while yet it was possible to end it without utter disaster. I mentioned what I had heard.

“The credit of the decision to evacuate Gallipoli,” he said in his quick, quiet tones, “belongs entirely to Bonar Law.” He added : “It was only because a journalist had gone to the Peninsula and seen things for himself that the truth ever reached this country.”

No doubt Mr. Bonar Law deserved the tribute. I happen to know, however, that had a second journalist, Northcliffe himself, not played a part in the business, it could not have been brought to the conclusion which was ultimately reached, a conclusion whereby the lives of so many gallant “ Anzacs ” were saved from useless sacrifice.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### “HARDLY TO BE SURPASSED”

GERMANY'S strength was so formidable at the beginning of 1918, the last year of the Great War, that every step which could be taken to reduce or nullify that strength was realized to be of vital importance. Among the steps which were taken was that of improving the British and allied propaganda in enemy countries. Northcliffe was invited to direct this work.

He was invited, that is to say, to tell the German people the truth about the war just as he had told his own people and the American people the truth about the war. He consented readily to undertake this work for which, certainly, he was better qualified than any other living man.

The problem which confronted him was the old problem of every newspaper man : how to obtain the news ; how to present it ; and how to secure that it reached its readers. In this particular instance the last difficulty was the chief difficulty, but Northcliffe devoted himself, nevertheless, to every aspect of his work. No detail was too small to escape his vigilant eye.

He laid it down as a working rule that “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” could be issued by him. Even the Germans should have their war news faithfully and honestly presented to them, without exaggeration

and without alteration. The truth, this great journalist believed, would sap the strength of Prussian Militarism at home as effectually as the same truth nerved the arms and steelled the hearts of free men in other lands to resist Prussian Militarism.

Northcliffe, in other words, put his faith in the humanity of the German people and acted on the idea that that humanity had been stifled and extinguished by the Prussian overlords. He actually dared to trust the German people and to approach them in the spirit of "gentlemen all."

That was the spirit which, as I have recounted, he showed towards the German prisoners in the hospital at Versailles. From the first there existed in his mind the sharpest distinction between the German folk and the overlords of Prussia. He was quite sure that the German folk had been bewitched by the glamour of "blood and iron" and thus had become willing accomplices in the great crime of 1914; but he believed, nevertheless, that this bewitchment was due, primarily, to lack of knowledge and to failure to learn and understand the truth. That there was a German democracy in the French and American and British sense he had no doubt. It was his mission to appeal to that democracy and, by supplying it with news on which it could absolutely rely, to rouse it to action.

In the same way, he appealed to the freedom-loving races who lay under the heel of Austria and Hungary, the Jugoslavs and the Czecho-Slovaks. His task was easier, here, because these people were only too ready to rise in defence of their freedom and to throw off the yoke of their oppressors.

The Northcliffe propaganda had begun to exert an

appreciable influence even before the great German offensive of 1918, which so nearly succeeded, had spent itself. Early in the summer of that year articles began to appear in the "enemy Press" complaining that enough steps were not being taken to counteract "Lord Northcliffe's great offensive with gas, drumfire, and all the tortures." Herr Paul Rohrbach wrote in July, in the *Deutsche Politik*, that Northcliffe was :

"A man without a moral conscience ; his daily tools are lying, coarseness and cynicism, but in the use of them he is a master."

The language is strangely familiar. Northcliffe's lack of a "moral conscience" seems to have been the complaint of all those, of whatever race, who found his home-truths unpalatable.

"Only one declaration," cried Herr Rohrbach, "is worthy of us, and it must be shouted into the world with cutting sharpness—that we will make no peace with people like Lloyd George—that creation of Northcliffe, the King of Lies, and like Poincaré and Clemenceau, the people responsible for the horrible brutalities committed against our prisoners, the people who have proclaimed the partition of Germany."

By the autumn, when the German *moral* at home was crumbling and when defeat was threatening all the German armies, the Prussian hatred of Northcliffe reached its boiling-point.

"The enemy . . ." wrote Von Hutier in a document which was captured by the American Army, "has founded

‘A Ministry for the Destruction of German Confidence,’ at the head of which he has put the most thoroughgoing rascal in all the *Entente*—Lord Northcliffe. . . .

“The method of Northcliffe at the front is to distribute, through airmen, a constantly increasing number of leaflets and pamphlets; the letters of German prisoners are falsified in the most outrageous way; tracts and pamphlets are concocted to which the names of German poets, writers and statesmen are forged or which present the appearance of having been printed in Germany and bear, for example, the title of the Recla series when they really come from the Northcliffe Press which is working day and night for the same purpose. . . .

“Fortunately Northcliffe, the Minister for the Destruction of German Confidence, forgets that German soldiers are neither negroes nor Hindus nor illiterate French, English or Americans, incapable of seeing through such machinations. Explain these infamous attempts to your young and inexperienced comrades, and tell them what our mortal enemy expects of them and what is at stake. Pick up the leaflets and pamphlets and give them to your commanders for transmission to the High Command, which may be able to make valuable deductions from them as to the aims of our enemies. You will thus help the Command and you will also help to hasten the hour of Victory.”

That document bore the date August 29, 1918; so that only about ten weeks separated Germany, when it was written, from “the hour of Victory,” for her foes.

All through September and October, as the Prussian



power wilted and the democratic feeling in Germany grew strong, the flow of invective against Northcliffe and his "world-poisoning propaganda" continued.

"The fact that Lord Northcliffe was selected as Minister for Propaganda in enemy countries," wrote Herr Georg Bernhard, "shows a cynicism which does not shrink from saying openly: 'We pursue our propaganda in order to attain by political means—taking the way round our men's minds—what cannot be accomplished either at the front or by the starvation war and the war of raw materials: the crushing of the German power of resistance.'"

The Armistice came and with it the truth about Northcliffe's last great service to his country when at war. The *Kölnische Volkszeitung* declared on November 19, 1918:

"Unfortunately we cannot deny that Lord Northcliffe attained all his aims, and he can leave the political arena in triumph."

In the following July, Herr Arnold Rechberg, writing in the *Tägliche Rundschau*, said:

"It cannot be doubted that Lord Northcliffe very substantially contributed to England's victory in the World War. His conduct of English propaganda during the war will some day find its place in history as a performance hardly to be surpassed. The Northcliffe propaganda during the war not only correctly estimated the mentality of the English people but quite as correctly the intellectual peculiarities of the Germans. Finally it understood and exploited the various

ways of thought of the nations allied with England and of the neutrals.”

The Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, wrote to Northcliffe :

“ I have had many direct evidences of the success of your invaluable work and of the extent to which it has contributed to the dramatic collapse of the enemy strength in Austria and Germany.”

Once again the fundamental principles of journalism, as applied by the greatest master of journalism who has ever lived, had achieved their purpose. Yet it was not journalism only which made the Northcliffe propaganda so effective an instrument of enlightenment : Northcliffe, in 1918, remained the Man with a Message who, so many years before, had set forth on his great enterprise of preaching the gospel of the nobility of human nature, the gospel of “ Gentlemen all,” of “ chums ” and brothers—that gospel which finds its complete antithesis in the gospel of militarism.

In that long journey from the Editorship of *Youth* and *The Bicycling News* to the Directorship of Propaganda in Enemy Countries, both the Man and his Message had developed and grown. The crudities of youth were left far behind ; the vision was wider ; sympathies had deepened and become more tolerant.

In faith, truly, but with humility, Northcliffe went forward to his last great national service.



## BOOK IV

### THE PATHFINDER

*“ Lord Northcliffe is not only a man of vision : he is a man of action. Shall I call him a great Imperial Pathfinder ? ”*

—SIR JOSEPH COOK, in Melbourne, 1921.



## CHAPTER XLV

### FROM WAR TO PEACE

IT is a simple statement of the fact that, during the tremendous German offensive of 1918, everything for which Northcliffe had pleaded and fought, usually single-handed, in 1915, was found to be essential to salvation : conscription, national organization, unity of Allied Command ; gun-power, air-power, food-rations, propaganda in enemy countries, propaganda in neutral countries, the thrift which enables men to lend their money to their country, most important of all, an enlightened and resolute public opinion. Most men would have been content with service so signal ; not so this man. The moment the war was over Northcliffe turned his thoughts to the ways and means of "Winning the Peace," and on November 4, 1918, a week before the Armistice, sent out to the Press of the whole world, except Germany, an article entitled "From War to Peace." On the signing of the Armistice this article was also sent to Germany.

"There is," wrote Northcliffe, "but one goal for those who are honest and far-seeing. That goal is to create a condition of the world in which there shall be opportunity and security for the legitimate development of all peoples. The road is long and difficult, but I believe that its course is already clear enough to be described, in the same words,

to those who are our friends and to those who are now our enemies."

The first essential condition of the period of transition from war to peace was, Northcliffe declared, the abandonment by the German people of its belief in Might.

"If Germany in word and deed makes plain her abandonment of that belief in Might which her rulers, supported until recently by the majority of her people, have used as a menace to the power of Right, the greatest obstacle in the path of equal justice will have been removed."

Not less important was it that Germany should accept certain principles for the security of civilian life and property, for example, the restoration of Belgium, the freeing of French territory, compensation for damage, the restoration to France of Alsace-Lorraine, readjustment of the northern frontiers of Italy, creation of independent Czecho-Slovak and Jugo-Slav states, a free Poland and settlement of the Balkan question.

The third essential seemed to Northcliffe to be :

"The establishing of a new policy in which a League of Free Nations shall replace the old system of the balance of rival Powers. . . . In the very act of seeking the foundation for a League of Free Nations and in slowly building up the fabric, we shall get rid of the passions and fears of war. By the mere endeavour to find the way to a better condition of the world we shall bring this better condition about."

This was written *before the Armistice* : to-day the Northcliffe plan, which resembled but is not by any means identical

with President Wilson's plan, is an accomplished fact. Many of its provisions are embodied in the Treaty of Versailles, that Charter of the New Europe and the New World. Northcliffe, when, with the very able assistance of Mr. Wickham Steed, he outlined this memorable scheme showed himself a true "world mind," a great citizen of the future.

He revealed, also, another trait in his character of which his enemies have made constant use as a means of pouring ridicule on him: the Napoleonic bent of his mind. Most people in Britain and many people in Europe have yet to learn that Napoleon, in his day, endeavoured to set up a "League of Free Nations" in opposition to "the old system of the balance of rival Powers" to which William Pitt committed Britain and Europe. Napoleon endeavoured to create a united Italy, to set Poland free, to rescue the German peoples from the iron clutches of Prussia, and to establish a permanent friendship between the democracies of France and of England. He was defeated in these attempts and, for a century, the Balance of Power, Pitt's plan, dominated Europe. It was King Edward VII, who, first of all, broke with Pitt's plan and established the *Entente* with France. Northcliffe followed where Napoleon and King Edward had led the way. He set before the world, in the very hour of Democracy's greatest victory, a truly democratic scheme for European and world peace, Napoleon's plan, modified to meet the changed needs of the hour.

"When the question of disarmament arises," wrote this seer, towards the end of his article, "some will demand as a fundamental necessity that their nation must have a large



army or a large navy. Some will advocate, as an act of punishment or of justice, the disarmament of other nations. In the consequent negotiations it will soon be found that to insist on an unduly large army or navy is to saddle one's country with a huge expense ; to insist on the disarmament of another country may be to present that country with a huge annual income that can be used in commercial rivalry. And so we may come to a condition in which, if there be international security, there will be a contest, not as to which country shall maintain the largest navy and the largest army, but as to which country shall most completely disarm."

## CHAPTER XLVI

### THE BALANCE OF POWER

HOW necessary Northcliffe's vigilance was was soon proved. No sooner had the Peace Conference assembled in Paris than it became evident that the ancient game of "the Balance of Power" was about to be revived. Mr. Lloyd George came to the conference with apparently a fixed idea that the best policy for England was the speedy restoration of Germany. He showed a most sanguine spirit about the "changed heart" of the "German Democracy." His attitude alarmed France. It aroused the anxiety of Northcliffe, who had gone to France, "to get the news"—and tell it. Mr. Lloyd George, doubtless, had his reasons for what he did, but Northcliffe saw immediately that the result of this course must be the "balancing" of French policy by German policy—Britain acting as the holder of the balance. Such a policy, in his view, must inevitably rouse the highest hopes of the German militarists, who would see in it a chance to reassert themselves, and must, in a corresponding degree, depress the influence of the German democracy. Thus, in Northcliffe's view, any return at all to the policy of the "Balance of Power" meant a betrayal of the men who had died that a free Europe might live.

The Northcliffe Press expounded this truth to the British people. The *Daily Mail* declared that the *Entente*

was in danger and demanded insistently that the war-guilty Prussians should be brought to trial and punished, the Kaiser not excepted. It expressed the view that Mr. Lloyd George was returning to "the old diplomacy" of mistrust of France—Pitt's plan—whereas the hope of humanity rested on complete mutual trust between the great democracies, America, France, and Britain.

This campaign roused Britain and caused angry protest to be addressed by Members of Parliament and others to the British Delegation in Paris. In a few days the policy of the "Balance of Power" was abandoned. Prussia gnashed her teeth; but the German Republic grew in strength as a consequence of Prussia's withered hopes. The first great danger to the New Europe had been averted.

## CHAPTER XLVII

“ NEVER ! ”

A SECOND danger came treading upon its heels. On October 1, 1919, Northcliffe received a letter from a member of the mechanical staff of the *Daily Mail* as follows :

“ DEAR LORD NORTHCLIFFE,

“ We, the machine managers, wish to enter a strong protest against the treatment that is being meted out to the N.U.R. (National Union of Railwaymen) in the columns of your Press.”

The letter was written at a moment when the threat of a general strike (the miners, the railwaymen and the transport workers) was in the air, and when Labour all over Europe was employing, or dallying with, the policy of “direct action”—that is to say, action over the heads of the duly elected Parliament of the people. Northcliffe saw in it a dangerous threat to the freedom and independence of the Press, a threat, that is to say, to the first principles of democracy. His reply was prompt :

“ Allow me,” he wrote, “ to express my surprise at the ingratitude displayed in your letter to-day, in which you complain of the attitude of my newspapers in the present dispute.

"You must be aware that my Press has always given great space to Labour matters. It will be within your memory that, during the recent General Election, I took the unprecedented step of placing valuable and prominent columns in these newspapers at the disposal of the Labour Party. I notice that, despite the shrunken sheets we are now issuing, Mr. J. H. Thomas's long statement of yesterday was given in full, and that Mr. Alexander M. Thompson, a known and respected Labour writer, voices the views of Labour practically every day.

*"I hope you will understand that I have no intention of allowing my newspapers to be influenced in this or any other matter.*

"For a long period my Press was assailed by the Asquith Government, its suppression was continually threatened, it was persecuted in the Law Courts and proscribed in Parliament, again and again.

"During the war it was attacked by ignorant members of the public, burned in the streets, boycotted by advertisers and banished from most of the principal clubs and reading-rooms.

"Lastly it has been bitterly and vulgarly assailed by Mr. Lloyd George because of its independence at the Peace Conference.

"I am entirely satisfied with the attitude of my journals towards this national calamity" (the Coal Strike of 1919), "*and rather than be dictated to by anyone or any body of men I will stop the publication of these newspapers*, and, in view of your letter, I have so informed the Newspaper Proprietors' Association."

It has always seemed to me that Northcliffe rendered a

great service to his country when he wrote that letter. He showed also, I think, a remarkable foresight; for, as the world was yet to learn, the very first step which the organizers of the General Strike in this country resolved upon was the dictation of policy and opinion to the Press and the muzzling of the newspapers. Northcliffe did not live to witness that night of May 1926, on which the attempt by the general strikers to control the news in the *Daily Mail* caused his old friend, that honest Englishman, Mr. Thomas Marlowe, the Editor of the paper, to close it down instantly rather than submit. Had he lived to see that night there is no doubt that his action would have been the same as Mr. Marlowe's action.

For this man hated tyranny and oppression above all things, and never, in his life, failed to recognize them when he saw them. The attempt to interfere with the newspapers in the General Strike was an attempt to prevent the British people from obtaining knowledge of the truth. It was an attempt to stifle public opinion, the sovereign power of democracy. In that respect it resembles exactly the attempts of the Prussian War Lords to stifle freedom. Northcliffe knew that any yielding on this vital point spelled the doom of that sovereignty of man to the upholding of which he had given his whole life: the ideals of the New Democracy, brotherhood and sonship, were alike impossible in a world in which a class-conscious minority, whether of noblemen, of merchants, or of printers, should be able to exert a censorship over the news.

And because Northcliffe's hands were clean, because, always, at all times, he had given the news, fairly and honestly, his triumph was complete and the foundations were laid by

him, deeply and surely, of a still greater triumph in face of a much greater emergency.

"Let the gentlemen, your fellow-countrymen, have the news," Northcliffe proclaimed in effect to the ranks of Labour, "that they may decide freely and justly for you or against you. Any other course is treason not only against Government or Empire, but actually against your own souls and against that democracy of which you are the children."

That Labour did not learn the lesson afforded it by the most sincere democrat of his age was Labour's bitter misfortune. Northcliffe foresaw in 1919 exactly what the British people would do in the face of a threat to wrest from them the sovereign power and to vest it in an unelected minority. He saw, too, that the independence of the Press was essential to the safeguarding of popular liberty.

The *Spectator* and many other newspapers in this and other countries gave whole-hearted support to Northcliffe on this occasion, declaring that he "is entirely in the right and his answer will, we think, discourage any revolutionists who propose to muzzle the Press through the printing-trade unions. Lord Northcliffe is well known in Fleet Street as a good employer. He has always been on good terms with the printers and with Labour in general. His vigorous protest will thus carry all the more weight."

To this hour a huge portrait of Lord Northcliffe hangs on the wall of the composing-room of *The Times*, a silent testimony to the truth of this statement.

I would like my reader to set against that episode another, which occurred some time later. Certain newspaper pro-

prietors desired to reduce the wages of their printers and suggested that all newspaper proprietors should associate themselves with this policy. Northcliffe met that suggestion with a flat refusal, and his determined attitude defeated the proposal. A friend of mine remarked to Northcliffe at the time that some of the printers on the *Daily Mail* owned motor-cars, so rich were they. The reply he received surprised him :

"Not nearly enough of them."

Northcliffe remained to the last a stout friend of Trade Unions, and never hid his contempt for the "merchants" who bought newspapers with the sole object of making money out of them or to obtaining social or political importance by means of them and who, in consequence, took little or no interest in the welfare of their staffs. The whole outlook on life of such persons seemed to this great journalist loathsome and degraded, for, in his view, they depraved one of the greatest of all the means for the regeneration of mankind. The exploiter of newspapers, no less than the suppressor of news was, in Northcliffe's view, an enemy of the public, a Prussian in a world of gentlefolk. Happily, as he knew, newspapers which are conducted for any ulterior reason almost invariably wither and die. The public is not so foolish as some people appear to believe. It may not be able, easily, to distinguish between the true and the "censored" version of events ; but it finds out, soon enough, those journals which are engaged in "fobbing off" upon it an inferior news service. Thus, in the end, it is only the honest, independent and ably conducted newspaper which survives and exerts influence.

"At a time," declared the *Daily Mail* in 1921, "when



millionaires of all sorts are trying to buy, and have bought, public opinion by getting possession of newspapers, the existence of an independent publication like the *Daily Mail*, which is just as independent of politicians as of advertisers and of readers, is an essential part of the body politic."

There was another danger to the freedom of the public which Northcliffe never underestimated or overlooked: the growing power of Government and other officials. In December 1920 when the swollen bureaucracy threatened, literally, to devour the national substance and, by its reckless extravagance, to make the hoped-for revival of industry impossible, Northcliffe wrote:

"Once again the Press is threatened with pains and penalties unless it will consent to look through the eyes of office and speak with the tongue of bureaucracy. Freemen against mercenaries, the lists are set; those fight to regain their freedom, these to retain their hire. If the Press of England is to enjoy a future worthy of its great past, its liberty must be preserved inviolate. If we must fight, let us inscribe upon our banner the sentence which Milton, borrowing it in the same cause, made one of the noblest in our language:

"This is true liberty, when free-born men,  
Having to advise the public, may speak free;  
Which he who can, and will, deserves high praise;  
Who neither can nor will, may hold his peace;  
What can be juster in a state than this?"

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### THE LAST FIGHT

ONE last fight to a finish lay before this great public man and he entered it with rare courage and enthusiasm. Northcliffe, in the bitter years, had changed his views about his native Ireland. The Irish folk, he had come to feel, no less than the English folk, or the Scottish folk, or the Welsh folk, were entitled to command their own destinies.

The first public avowal of that new faith had been made in 1917, at a moment when the Irish Rebellion of the year before had turned almost every English heart against Ireland. It was like Northcliffe, like the bigness of him, and the courage of him, and the goodness of him, to become the champion, then, of the Irish people, and I confess that, knowing as I do the intimate history of what was to follow, I still read with a thrill of delight this statement made by him at a dinner given by the Irish Club in March 1917 :

“The evidence that the Irish population, in a hundred years, has been reduced to what it is, is, from my point of view, an unanswerable argument that this department of the British Government has been badly managed.

“The very fact that young Irish folk want to get away from Ireland and would be getting away in thousands to-day,

but for the limitations of transport" (due to the war), "proves that things have not been as they should. The further fact that the Irish who go carry with them a sense of grievance, which cannot all be artificial sentiment, is proof beyond dispute that those who have the welfare of Ireland, and the good reputation of Great Britain at heart, should take this great opportunity by the forelock and make a supreme effort to find good government for Ireland.

"We know that no form of government suits everybody in any country; and, as regards Ireland, nothing will be definitely arrived at unless something is tried. . . . Ireland is in a bad way and needs instant attention. . . . Individual people, like the Irish, have a very human desire to arrange their own affairs for themselves. England cannot talk about the rights of smaller nations while ignoring the insistent demand for some readjustment of Irish affairs. . . .

"I would respectfully point out to the Government that, without Irish development and Irish happiness the participation of Ireland in the great struggle for freedom that is now being waged is not possible."

It was never Northcliffe's way to speak without acting. The ink on the Treaty of Versailles was not dry before he had thrown himself with his whole energy into the work of securing an Irish settlement on the lines of freedom *without coercion of Ulster*. *The Times* opened that splendid campaign and, in the face of a howl of angry protest from the Government, outlined the scheme which is, to-day, the basis of Irish peace. At some future period the full story of all that Northcliffe did, during the fierce months of this struggle, which ended in the

complete conversion of the Coalition Government to his views and the setting up of the Irish Free State, will be told in its details ; for the moment the fact itself must suffice. A period of hope and happiness has arrived for Ireland. I say without the slightest fear of contradiction that Ireland and her sister, Britain, owe this inestimable blessing chiefly, if not wholly, to the labours of Northcliffe. Had he achieved nothing else in the whole course of his life, this achievement would entitle him to immortality in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen and in the hearts of all lovers of freedom everywhere. In saying that I do not overlook the invaluable help which this great man received in this matter from others.

The weight of the burden, however, lay on Northcliffe's shoulders. That it was heavy may be guessed from the single fact that, though "No Coercion of Ulster" was a principal condition of the proposed plan, lifelong friends protested against the "Irish Campaign" with all the sincerity and all the zeal at their command. *The Times* and its principal proprietor stood, for many months, in direct opposition not only to the British Government but also to a very large body of British public opinion.

Northcliffe never flinched, never feared and never doubted. He had seen his duty and, as always, had set himself to perform it. In Ireland as in Britain, and as everywhere else, there was need, or so he believed, of the faith of the New World ; brotherhood and trust founded on knowledge of the facts of the situation.

And once again the policy of "gentlemen all" proved a better means to salvation than "direct action" or political chicanery.

## CHAPTER XLIX

### A MISSIONARY OF DEMOCRACY

THE policy of "gentlemen all" had another great exponent at this time, namely the President of the United States of America. The President ardently desired that the Allies of the Great War should seize the chance, afforded them by victory, to reduce their navies as well as their armies. The Washington Conference on Naval Disarmament was the practical outcome of that aspiration.

The idea of the conference, it may be admitted, aroused very little enthusiasm among the war-weary peoples of Europe, who were as tired of such meetings as they were of battles. Those who discussed the subject at all usually shrugged their shoulders :

"How can we reduce our navy," they asked, "when there are so many dangers lying ahead of us?"

Northcliffe was not among those who spoke in this fashion; nor was he among those who regarded the Washington Conference lightly. That conference, on the contrary, engaged his anxious attention from the day on which it was first proposed. He saw its immense possibilities for good.

But he saw also the dangers which might attend it. One of these dangers was the apathy of both France and Britain. American faith in the professed love of peace of these sister

democracies would be shaken if neither of them displayed any enthusiasm about reducing their armaments. Another danger resided in the fact that Japan and Britain were allies and that America looked on this alliance as, in some sort, a threat to herself, seeing that acute differences of opinion had manifested themselves between the Japanese and the American peoples.

Northcliffe, in 1921, informed the British people about the importance of the forthcoming Washington Conference and explained, day after day, the bearing of that conference on America, France and the British Empire. He pointed out that the surest way to induce nations to cut down their armaments is to remove possible sources of dispute between them.

Enthusiasm for the Washington Conference began to manifest itself both in Britain and in France, but there was much less enthusiasm in Australia, where it was felt that any reduction of British naval strength must spell danger from Japanese aggression. In Japan, too, a certain coldness showed itself as a consequence of the attacks on the Anglo-Japanese treaty.

Northcliffe noted all these symptoms with the swiftness of a highly trained physician observing a patient. He knew the interpretation of them. Both Japan and Australia were labouring under misapprehension. The Japanese did not understand the British point of view ; the Australians did not understand the Japanese point of view. Both countries stood in urgent need of a clear exposition of the truth. Moreover, it was essential that public opinion at home should be fully informed about public opinion abroad. Northcliffe perceived that the conception of Britain as "the Mother-Country" was no longer justified in the old sense. The Mother Spirit

of Britain belonged now, perhaps, more to the Dominions than to the Home Land—to those immense democracies growing up far from the stream of European history rather than to a democracy which belonged to that history. Northcliffe desired to know the minds of the Dominions, for he realized that these minds were destined, powerfully, in the future, to influence the mind of Britain and of the world. He saw the Empire as one single state each part of which was dependent upon all the other parts for its welfare and even for its existence.

There is the reason for the ceaseless fight which he made for better news services between the Dominions and the Home Land, for more efficient and cheaper cable services, and for more knowledge, in all the newspaper offices of the world, of the peoples of the world and their aspirations. The policy of "gentlemen all" might, this great gentleman believed, be applied fearlessly to the whole earth provided that knowledge and news were freely and fully given to the peoples. A world public-opinion, in short, must be created as the sure shield of humanity against oppression and violence; a "League of Brothers," to reinforce the efforts of the League of Nations.

While these ideas were growing swiftly in Northcliffe's mind there came to him, in the early summer of 1921, an invitation to go out to Australia and become, himself, the missionary of his own views about that continent. That invitation, which most men of 56, who had so prodigally spent themselves in their country's service, would have felt justified in declining, sounded in Northcliffe's ears as the call of duty. He decided, on the spot, to go to Australia, and

from Australia to Japan, in order to explain, with his own lips, to these peoples the meaning of the Washington Conference as he understood that meaning and the way in which the Washington Conference could be helped to achieve its purpose by these peoples. He decided, at the same time, to use the opportunity of his "world tour" to serve the British public as a special correspondent in the lands he was about to visit.

That decision cost Northcliffe his life. And he was well aware, for many warnings were addressed to him by physicians on the subject, that it might cost him his life. Yet I believe that he was right in taking it. The situation was urgent and the time remaining until the opening of the Washington Conference was short; the stake was the ripening friendship of the great democracies of Europe with the great democracy of America. There must be no "chilling frost" to destroy that brightest hope of mankind. Nor was any other man available to undertake the mission. Few people at home realize, to this hour, how great was the love and honour in which Northcliffe was held in the Dominions of the Empire. Australia, in particular, blessed, and *blesses*, his name, for his work in bringing about the evacuation of Gallipoli. To Northcliffe, and to Northcliffe alone, would Australians listen when the subject was the delicate one of immigration. He alone was independent of policies and party ties, yet was possessed of the status of a great public figure. He alone had the means at his disposal of supplying the public opinion of the whole world with raw material.

I believe he was right, just as I believe that he was right, during the war, to set aside his anonymity, "Mr. X." and the



other disguises, and to come forth as a public man. "Mr. X." could not have achieved for Britain what Lord Northcliffe achieved for her. Enemies sneered that Northcliffe "loved celebrity and the public eye"; as always they revealed only their own bitterness.

"I have resolved," wrote the object of their sneers to his family on the last day of his world tour, "that I was not built for any kind of public life, and that I hate crowds, demonstration, ceremonial and, curiously enough, although I am one myself, reporters. . . . Let me finish by saying that my chief companion, Prioleau, and I went round the world together without a cross word. It says a great deal for Prioleau."

## CHAPTER L

### “THE EMPTY CONTINENT”

I WAS present at Waterloo Station on that grilling July day of 1921 on which Northcliffe, accompanied by Mr. Wickham Steed, set forth on his world tour. I remember thinking, at the time, how well he looked, how young and eager. I, for one, certainly did not foresee that never again would I observe that look of health on his cheeks. The Northcliffe who returned from the Antipodes was already a dying man, stricken by that dreadful form of heart-disease, infective endocarditis, from which no human being has ever recovered.

The world tour began in America. From America Northcliffe travelled across Canada to Vancouver. He wrote of this journey to his family :

“The American fleet is here (Vancouver) to-day and is being entertained by local Scotsmen. What does rather appeal to me is the fact that for 300 miles, coming to Vancouver, we have seen Chinese and Japanese by the hundreds. A long interview, which I did not give, appears from me in the local Japanese newspaper here. All I said to the man was that I was grateful for the offer of the Japanese Osaka Sun (Rising Sun) to entertain me, that I had received gifts from the proprietor and knew the Editor, Sugimura, well.

“The Japanese are spreading their tentacles in British

Columbia as in California. They have their own newspapers, and the chief Japanese newspapers, such as the *Asahi*, have their non-resident correspondents here. . . . It would do English people good to see the intense British loyalty of the British people here. To hear them sing : ' God Save the King ' is a revelation. Their ' O Canada ' is a very touching national anthem."

At Fiji a deputation of the Overseas Club waited on Northcliffe.

" I spoke," he wrote home, " on the subject of disarmament, but it did not interest them nearly so much as a mention I made of their monthly ship starting to London ! "

Perhaps the writer sympathized with that very human outlook ; for this man was a human being first and a statesman afterwards. His statesmanship indeed sprang from his humanity. Those who have read that remarkable posthumous work, *My Journey Round the World*, which was published in 1923, and which consists of Northcliffe's private letters to his family circle and of his diaries, must have marvelled at the simpleness and the " humanness " of the man : his love of birds, his interest in flowers, his young enthusiasm for sports and games. Northcliffe was a good golfer and was one of the recognized authorities on dry-fly fishing, but his sportsmanship was a much bigger thing than mere angler's craft. He was a naturalist by instinct, deeply versed in the ways and manners of Nature and with the love of wild creatures in his heart. The attention which his newspapers always gave to " nature " had its origin in his own instincts. His stout democratic instincts, too, were ever alert.

“ I was brought out from England,” a New Zealander told him, “ when I was two years of age. Father would not stand the squire and parson business.”

“ The squire and parson business,” commented Northcliffe, “ seems to have made a firm impression upon the New Zealanders and to have driven out very fine people. As I think I have said before, I cannot conceive why any person of the agricultural class remains at home.”

He added :

“ There are no game laws here. . . . No wonder these young people are very different to the peasants of Essex and Wiltshire. This attitude is more like that of Scotch people (but with no respect for the laird). They are independent but polite. . . . In the mind of each of them there is the desire for a Utopia—a land of equality.”

At Sydney, Northcliffe was received as the friend and benefactor of the Australian people, and the *Sun* of September 7, 1921, declared in tones of delight :

“ There seemed precious few things that he hadn't heard about us. He seemed to have known our history from childhood.”

The paper then proceeded to remind its readers of their visitor's share in the Gallipoli evacuation and afforded a picture of him seated in “ the historic Walter Room in *The Times* office.”

“ Viscount Northcliffe,” the *Sun* declared, “ had his own intelligence corps. He had authentic first-hand knowledge

of the ebb and flow of the fortunes of the Allies on every front. While Australia was being doped by the censorship into belief that the Anzacs were steadily thrusting their way towards Constantinople, he knew they were perched perilously on cliff heads, fighting against inevitable defeat with dauntless courage, and daily approaching a terrible catastrophe because their effective strength was being white-anted by dysentery and disease."

It was true, and so was the newspaper's comment on Northcliffe's share in the evacuation :

"A splendid service greatly rendered to Australia."

At Melbourne the enthusiasm was as great as at Sydney. Northcliffe began to open his mind :

"My chief present interest in life," he told a reporter there, "is the Disarmament Conference. That course, along with carefully selected agricultural immigration, is the only way you can keep Australia white. Anyone who reads the Oriental newspapers can see that they contain constant references to what they term the 'dog-in-the-manger' policy of Australia and New Zealand. They claim that you will neither people your country nor let anyone else do so. . . .

"I say that this conference (the Washington Disarmament Conference) is the most important collection of human beings that ever assembled in the world's history. One can only contemplate its failure with horror. It was a most courageous thing for the President of the United States to initiate. . . ."

"And Ireland?" prompted the reporter.

“ *The Times*,” said its principal proprietor, “ is the newspaper which initiated the idea of Dominion Home Rule for Ireland. Very slowly the British Government has fallen into line with that policy, and has now gone beyond even the most sanguine hopes of supporters of that policy.”

The moment for plain speaking had now arrived. Northcliffe issued a statement of his views to the Australian people.

“ I leave lovely Australia,” he declared, “ haunted and saddened by thoughts of your weakness. . . . I am amazed at your indifference to the events and portents in the outside world and especially in Asia. One can almost smell the East in your northern winds and yet I have met scarcely a score of men and women in Australia with any sense of the imminent danger in which the country stands. . . .

“ The world will not tolerate an empty and idle Australia . . . You have no option. Tens of millions will come to you whether you wish it or not. You cannot hold up the human flood by a restriction clause in an Act of Parliament. Make your foundations safe and play about with social reforms and State Socialism and all the rest of your present small Parliamentary stock-in-trade afterwards. I am staggered by the indifference of the Australian people to the vital question of immigration. . . .

“ Why not a bold, constructive immigration policy? Where is the obstacle? Why all the hesitation and fumbling? Why not at once take steps to establish within two or three years a flow of at least 100,000 people a year to the Commonwealth with a rapid increase to 250,000? Is the failure to

move due to political fears? If so, such fears are surely groundless. Immigration could, by a bold, imaginative, constructive scheme be made greatly popular with Australian electors. The outstanding fact is that Australia must have people. The people are available. Australia can absorb and prosper them and their coming will profit all the classes already in the country. Immigration in Australia is a nightmare to public men only because it is being conducted both in Britain and here on tinkering, feeble lines. . . .

“What is clearly and urgently needed is a great development scheme which will ensure over, say, twenty-five years more work than can be done by the workers already in Australia, more land available for settlement by new farmers than can be taken up by the land seekers already in Australia, and greatly increased production, which would mean more work, more opportunity and more wealth for all classes. Such a scheme would free the immigration movement from the antagonism of the Australian workers and land-seekers, and the cost and national value of the immigrant would at once be recognized.”

This “nation-building proposal” stands to-day as the unrealized hope of Australia. Yet, in casting his bread on the waters, Northcliffe did not lack an immediate return. His fearless truth-telling exercised a profound influence on opinion and this was duly reflected at the Washington Conference and contributed in no small degree to the success of that Conference. It is impossible, I believe, to contemplate this phase of Northcliffe’s life without a sense of wonder. How right he was! How grand were the con-

ceptions which filled his mind ! How vast was his knowledge, yes, and how surely founded on knowledge of human nature, on understanding and love of men and women.

"I wonder," he wrote to his family, "if people at home realize that these (Australian) people don't want immigrants. They fear immigrants will divide up the work and the land too much. There is no more unpopular topic in Australasia than immigration, except among the thinking people, a few of whom realize that Japan will otherwise certainly occupy Australasia. I spoke on immigration everywhere."

There remained to Northcliffe the second part of the duty which he had set out to perform : the explaining to Japan the reasons why the Anglo-Japanese Alliance could not be continued. He expressed his views firmly and courteously and received, on the whole, a cordial welcome from the Japanese people. His efforts served, without doubt, the purpose which he had in view.

From Japan he passed to China, where he foresaw, and foretold, much trouble. Then he journeyed to Malay and India, Egypt and Palestine, observing closely as he travelled, and sharing his new knowledge, from time to time, with the readers of his papers. Great schemes were maturing in his mind, fresh plans for the knitting together of free men in every land.

But it was not to be. On the day on which he landed at Marseilles from his world tour, Northcliffe had but six months to live—months of suffering and weakness and ever-deepening night.

His work was finished.



## CHAPTER LI

### THE SWEETEST TRIBUTE

AS I have said, I saw him on one occasion during this last tragic period which belongs not to the history of his life but to the history of his last illness. Death was imprinted on that brave and noble face; yet his eyes were as steady as in the old days and his smile was as joyous. I like to think that, until the end approached, he was unaware of the cruel fate which awaited him.

As the end approached, and the fever, which burned in heart and blood-vessels, occasionally relaxed its severity, knowledge of the truth of his condition came to Northcliffe. He received his sentence of death without flinching, and without flinching bade good-bye to those whom he loved.

On August 14, 1922, he died.

The funeral service which took place in Westminster Abbey was deeply impressive, but not more so, I think, than the silent testimony of the crowds who lined the route of the procession all the way from Westminster to Hampstead. On that day vast numbers of English folk knew in their hearts that they had lost a friend.

He had not asked a sweeter tribute.







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